

SACRED SPACE

Power of Silence

There is something beyond our mind which abides in silence within our mind. It is the supreme mystery beyond thought. Let the mind and subtle body rest upon that and not rest on anything else.

Maitri Upanishad



I am silence among all secrets.

Bhagwad Gita 10.38



Silence will carry the truth. Do not spend your energy in talking, but meditate in silence. Accumulate power in silence and become a dynamo of spirituality.

Swami Vivekananda



Food of soul is silence. If we are not practising silence, we are starving ourselves.

Dada J P Vaswani



Empty yourself of everything. Let the mind rest at peace. The ten thousand things rise and fall while the Self watches their return. They grow and flourish and then return to the source. Returning to the source is stillness, which is the way of nature.

Lao Tzu

Be An Arrow Of Attention

K M Gupta

When the Kurukshetra war was all set to begin, Krishna converts interspace into a classroom. To set Arjuna to proper action, Krishna has to put him on the right approach that comes from right attitude which in turn comes from proper understanding and that, from proper knowledge.

Life is a classroom and you never cease to be a student. The moment you cease to be a student you become deadwood. So the first lesson for all students of life is how to be a good student. And that is the first lesson to be taught to all students from Kindergarten.

How can a student be a good or even best student? Look at the knowledge-understanding-attitude-approach chain. Knowledge comes first. Gaining knowledge is the primary aim of education. Knowledge metamorphoses into wisdom in the form of understanding-attitude-approach. So go get knowledge first.

But knowledge doesn't favour all. It comes only to those who have curiosity which is the mother of knowledge. It is the greatest virtue. What do all science, discovery and invention owe their origin to? Curiosity. What made Albert Einstein the greatest of all scientists? Curiosity. Those without curiosity are 'knowledge-challenged'. So cultivate curiosity, for curiosity cultivates knowledge.

I have one thing in common with Isaac Asimov, the renowned science fiction writer. He said, "My father taught me all that I have today. How? He taught me curiosity, and with that I learned all I have." Once the head teacher of my son's school summoned me and gave me a dressing down: "Your son has fared awfully badly in maths this time!" I taught my son maths at home. Not for long,

only for a short while. Next time he became a topper and also, maths became his first love. What was the magic? I taught him maths. But not just maths but curiosity as well, which I learned from my father.

In the present system of education students can't expect curiosity to be taught. So students must teach themselves curiosity. Don't just cram lessons. Cultivate curiosity towards what you learn. Anything can be the subject of your curiosity – grammar, maths, even morals. Convert everything into curiosity. What is it about? What is it for? How does it work? How does it fit in with life? If you have curiosity, nothing is dull or tough. Mathematics is usually the bete noire for average students. But mathematics is the most interesting of all subjects in the world – if only you are curious. If you are dull in mathematics, it means your teacher has failed in cultivating curiosity in you. Don't wait for the teacher. Teach yourself curiosity. Start looking at things with curious eyes. Sit for a while in the class of the greatest of all teachers of all times and listen: 'Shraddhavan labhate jnanam.'

Attention is the sharp edge of curiosity. In the Upanishad the guru tells his student, 'sharavat thanmayo bhavet' – be like an arrow set on its aim. To be an arrow set on its aim, you should have no diversions. And to have no diversions you should have your senses in control. So Krishna adds: 'Tatparah samyattendriyah.' Have no diversions and have your senses in control. Curiosity can lead to bad things also. So Krishna asks you to know what is day and what is night, in which to wake up and in which to sleep, when to open your eyes and when to shut them. The Gita is a guide on how to be an Arrow of Attention.

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The Holy Fire

The world is a rosebud/
Smiling in the heart of
your flame/ O Divine fire,
holiest of the holy,/ O fire,
most high, sacrosanct/
Favour me with a sip of
light, and,/ Love and
laughter/ Shall hug the
cosmos/ In boundless
generosity./ Joy will be
the Bird of Paradise/
Winging the galaxies and
the Milky Way/ Magic
and melody/ Will dance
in the eternity of ecstasy.

Bejan Daruwalia

✦
Joy is the holy fire
that keeps our purpose
warm and our
intelligence aglow.

Helen Keller

✦
The most powerful
weapon on earth is the
human soul on fire.

Ferdinand Foch

✦
It is with our passions as
it is with fire and water;
they are good servants,
but bad masters.

Aesop's Fables

✦
There may be a great fire
in our soul, yet no one ever
comes to warm himself at
it, and the passers-by see
only a wisp of smoke.

Vincent van Gogh

Just Remove Those Tinted Glasses

P V Vaidyanathan

We don't often see it clearly, but the fact is that for everything, there is a subject and object. Everything we perceive in existence is a combination of subject and object. If one changes, so does the other. And since each of us, as subject or object, is different and unique, we perceive the same world differently. It is almost as if we are all carrying a bubble around us. What we see is what the bubble allows us to see. The bubble may be transparent, tinted, dirty, distorted or damaged; depending on the properties of the bubble, we 'see' reality. It is as if each of us is wearing glasses which function differently. And we see the world depending on what sort of glasses we are wearing currently.

Truth or reality is what exists; but due to our bubbles or tinted spectacles, we are almost never able to see the truth, as it exists. Invariably, we tend to add our feelings, thoughts, perceptions, beliefs, interpretations and reactions to this reality. If reality is the actual dish that is being cooked, our perceptions become the spice and salt. If the dish forms the major portion and spice and salt form a minor one, the serving would be palatable. But if our additives are more than the nature of the actual dish, the food would taste terrible, and would be unfit for consumption. This is what is happening with most of us; we tend to add too much of our own perceptions or interpretations to every event that occurs in our lives. Perhaps that's why we have more unhappiness and sorrow, since we read too much into reality.

The bubble or spectacles through which we see the world is our mind and ego. Everything we experience is filtered through the

mind. Every sight, sound, sensation, emotions, and every word that we encounter is analysed by the mind. And no one mind is like another. Hence, my interpretation of any event or person is totally different from yours or anyone else's. This is also the basis of every conflict that arises in the world, for it is rare for two persons to see things in exactly the same manner. The more still and peaceful the mind, the less judgmental we are, and the greater the chance of us coming close to reality. The degree of conflict that we have with others will be directly proportional to the amount of thoughts that our mind generates about any situation.



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In order to achieve joy, harmony and happiness, we try and change things, events and circumstances. We want to achieve happiness without changing anything about ourselves. We rave and rant, manipulate, beg, borrow and steal, struggle, work hard, put pressure on others, confront, accuse, make others feel guilty – we basically try and do whatever we can, to bring about harmony. Sometimes we succeed and at other times we don't.

While we are trying to change situations to suit ourselves, we often forget that everyone else is also doing the same. The intelligent aim, however, would be to get a favourable outcome not by trying to change what is outside us and over which we have limited control, but to change what lies inside us, something over which we can exert total control. Any situation can change provided we are ready to change. By changing our behaviour, and by taking the path of acceptance and surrender, in one instant, we can convert conflict into compromise and cooperation, and misery into happiness.

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SACRED SPACE

The Master

Cool as sandalwood,
serene as the moon
are saints;

Serene as the moon,
the feverish heat of the
world do they cool.

Anyone who comes
to them on fire
is soothed by the
sweetness of their words.
Infinite is their patience,
boundless their love
and compassion...

The maladies – physical,
mental and spiritual –
all three vanish when the
eye beholds a saint...

Sant Paltu



The grace of the Guru is
like an ocean. If one
comes with a cup he will
only get a cupful. It is no
use complaining of the
niggardliness of the
ocean. The bigger the
vessel the more one will
be able to carry. It is
entirely up to him.

Ramana Maharshi



...The holy teachings
that come from the
mouth of godly men
seem to be uttered by
those men themselves,
while in reality they
proceed from God.

*Ramakrishna
Paramhansa*

The Way You Use Your Hands

Marguerite Theophil

It is easy, too easy, as we get caught up with so many things in an overly-busy time, to lose sight of what is important in our lives. And if we are lucky, sometimes a teacher – in the form of a person, a sentence, an image, a book – will appear...

One such teacher was a book, *How to Train a Wild Elephant: And Other Adventures in Mindfulness*, authored by Jan Chozen Bays. Abbess of a Zen monastery, also paediatrician, mother, and grandmother, Bays's book on mindfulness is designed particularly 'for those who would love to practise mindfulness, but...can't seem to find the time!' We are offered one mindfulness exercise per chapter. Each is meant to be practised for one week, mindfully, before moving to or including the next practice.

All suggested practices deal with one of three central tenets of mindful living: staying in the present moment, being aware of our own actions, and observing the world around us. One of my favourites is 'Use loving hands and a loving touch, even with inanimate objects.' Sounds simple, yes? However, it is so revealing when you get down to doing it. For a whole week!

Entering this practice, we soon become aware of when we ourselves or others are *not* using loving hands. We begin to notice, perhaps as never before, how doors are slammed, purchases shoved at us, money handed over impatiently, luggage hurled onto the conveyor belt at the airport. We all know how to use loving hands and touch, Bays points out; after all we touch babies, faithful dogs, crying children, and lovers with tenderness and care. So how come we don't use loving touch more often, if not all the time? This is the essential

question of mindfulness – Why can't we live like this all the time? Once we discover how much richer our life is when we are more present, why do we fall back into our old habits?

Bays not only offers us a challenge – or invitation – each week, she leads us into deeper reflections around each one. Ordinarily we are more aware of using loving touch with people than with objects. And yet, when we are in a hurry or upset, we do end up turning someone into an object by the way we treat him. We rush out of the house without saying good-bye; ignore a co-worker's greeting because of a disagreement the day before; fail to pause a moment to express appreciation. "...This is how other people become objectified, a nuisance, an obstacle, and ultimately, an enemy."

I was reminded once more that mindfulness also involves walking with discomfort – walking right into it, and feeling within the body what is true. And when we are this attentive, when our meditative absorption is deep, what we call discomfort or pain begins to shift, reduce and perhaps even disappear.

The practices range from the simple to do, to ones that are harder, even ones that might make us uneasy. Confronting difficult truths is an essential part of the mindfulness process, and this is brought home sharply in the practice 'This Person Could Die Tonight' which encourages us to remember that when interacting with someone, anyone, it could be for the last time.

In our quest for inner peace, sustained mindfulness practice is a method that i find works even for the most excitable and reactive among us. And even if we lapse, we will come upon those who bring us back to the path.

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Purpose of Life

You are what your deep driving desire is; As your deep driving desire is, so is your will; As your will is so is your deed; As your deed is so is your destiny.

*Brihadaranyaka
Upanishad*

Life finds its purpose and fulfilment in the expansion of happiness.
Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, honourable and compassionate, to have it make some difference.

Ralph W Emerson

You will never be happy if you continue to search for what happiness consists of. You will never live if you are looking for the meaning of life.

Albert Camus

Just living is not enough... one must have sunshine, freedom and a little flower.

Hans C Andersen

The goal of life is to make your heartbeat match the beat of the universe, to match your nature with Nature.

Joseph Campbell

Delicious Food For The Soul

Discourse: Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

Meditation is the journey from movement to stillness, from sound to silence. The need is present in you to meditate because it is your natural tendency to look for undiminished joy and love that doesn't distort or turn negative.

Is meditation alien to us? That's not true because you have been in meditation even before your birth. In the womb you were doing nothing. You didn't even have to chew food; you were fed directly and you were happily floating in fluid, turning and kicking. That is meditation or absolute comfort. You did nothing, everything was done for you. Isn't it natural for us to crave for that state of absolute comfort? And getting back to that state which you have had a taste of, just before entering the hustle and bustle of the world is very natural because everything in the universe is cyclic, and wants to go back to its source.

The natural tendency is to recycle all that we've collected in life as impressions, getting rid of them and getting back to the original state we were at birth is what meditation is all about. Becoming fresh again, alive, is what it is. Getting back to that serenity, your original nature, is meditation. It is absolute joy and happiness; pleasure minus excitement. A thrill without anxiety is meditation. It is love without hatred or any of its opposite values.

Meditation is food for the soul. When you are hungry, spontaneously you eat something. If you are thirsty you drink water. Similarly, the soul yearns for meditation and this tendency is in everyone. Hence, there is not a single individual who is not a seeker. It's just that they don't recognise it. The problem is that we try to

look for that food where it is not available. It is like going to a grocery shop when you want to fill fuel in your car. You keep going around the grocery store saying, 'I want fuel for my car.' It won't work because you need to go to the petrol station. So, find the right direction. Meditation happens in transition. Actually meditation happens, you can't do it. You can only create a congenial atmosphere for it to happen.

Meditation is uplifting energy and mind and spreading it out. When you're happy, you associate it with a sense of expansion. And whenever you have felt miserable, you associate it with a sense of shrinking or contraction. There is something in you which expands when you're happy and contracts when you're unhappy. But we never pay attention to what is contracting and expanding. We only keep our attention outside; we have not paid attention to the reason.



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Sage Gaudapadacharya said, "There is something in you that is expanding that is worth knowing." Even a glimpse of this consciousness, this energy inside you, can make the smile on your face so strong that nothing whatsoever can take it away from you. Nobody can make you miserable or take away the joy from your life. Life assumes another dimension suddenly once you glimpse something inside that is expanding. You don't have to leave things here and go. Just being amidst all the noise and still recognising that beauty is so wonderful, so fascinating, right here and now and that is meditation, which is supreme prayer.

All powers are hidden within the Self and everything will manifest when you connect to your consciousness.

Join Art of Living 'Meditate India' initiative on May 13. www.artofliving.org/meditateindia

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Knowledge vs Ignorance

Perseverance, in seeking to gain, the knowledge of the Supreme Spirit, and perception of the gain that comes from knowledge of the truth: this is called knowledge.

All that is contrary to this is ignorance.

Bhagwad Gita 13.11



Ignorance is the failure to discriminate between the permanent and the impermanent, the pure and the impure, bliss and suffering, the Self and the non-Self. When ignorance is destroyed, the Self is liberated from its identification with the world. This liberation is Enlightenment.

Patanjali



Knowing much is ignorance; knowing only One is wisdom.

Swami Veda Bharti



Knowledge leads to unity, but ignorance to diversity. So long as God seems to be outside and far away, there is ignorance. But when God is realised within, that is true knowledge.

Swami Akhilananda

Something More Than Money

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

After a foreign tour, I landed at the Delhi airport where I used a wheelchair. At the exit my companion offered some money to the boy who was manoeuvring my wheelchair. The boy refused, saying, "Don't give me money but give me your ashirwaad, blessings. I am appearing for an examination; please pray that I pass it." I put my hand on his head and prayed for him.

What the boy said was not something simple. It represents a creative mindset. It is to opt for hard work instead of for easy money. It is to opt for a 'self-made man' formula, rather than trying to find favour.

When you try to live on your own, you are trying to tap your potential. Everyone is born with enormous potential, but potential can be developed only by hard work. The best policy for anyone trying to succeed in life is to try to unfold his potential rather than try to receive any advantage from elsewhere.

People generally say with envy that so-and-so was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. But this is wrong. Fortunate is one who is born with an incentive spoon in his mouth. If you are born to a life of hardship, it will activate you and this will give you incentive to work. On the other hand, if you are born into a life of comfort, it will kill your motivation. Certainly, self-motivation is of far greater value than external support.

Every favour is limited in nature. It has no unlimited scope. But when you try to unfold your potential, that is like embarking upon a journey that is limitless. Favour may give you temporary relief, but hard work is the only way to achieve great success. All super

achievements were born out of hard work rather than favours.

It has been rightly said: 'It is not ease but effort, not facility but difficulty that makes men.' Facility may seem good, but difficulty is better in terms of result. Opting for effort is good for both physical health and intellectual development.

Living on favours means living as a taker in society. But living as a hard worker means being a giver in society. And it is a fact that the giver is better off than the taker.

When you achieve something by dint of hard work, it gives you one precious thing, and that is confidence. Hard work is always accompanied by confidence. And confidence leads to peace of mind. Nothing is better than peace of mind.

Once a man came to the Prophet of Islam. He said: "I am a pauper. Give me some money for my livelihood." The Prophet said: "That would not be good for you." Then he gave him a formula for dignity: "The upper hand is better than the lower hand." Then the Prophet gave him a few silver coins, and said: "Go to the jungle, cut some wood, and sell it to earn your livelihood. And meet me in two months' time."

The man accepted the Prophet's words. He led his life as advised by the Prophet. Then, two months later, he came back to the Prophet and said: "I am happy with my job. Now I have decided not to ask for anything from anyone."

By hard work you can earn money, but through money you cannot achieve hard work. The best formula of life is this: Do not try to obtain favours, but rely on your own efforts.

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Love For Truth

The knower of Truth is never miserable in the world, for the whole universe is filled with Himself alone.

Astavakra Gita



Those who are attuned to Truth, love the Truth.

The Lord Himself bestows this gift; He shall not take it back.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib



Truth can only come to the mind that is empty of the known. It comes in a state in which the known is absent, not functioning.

J Krishnamurti



Truth is immediate and radiant. It is not that truth has to be discovered – only you have to become aware.

Osho



Whenever you have Truth it must be given with love, or the message will be rejected

Mahatma Gandhi



People say they love truth, but in reality they want to believe that which they love is true.

Robert J Ringer

Feel Free, Dance A Little More

Talk: Osho

Start living this moment and you will see that the more you live, the less problems there are. Now that your emptiness is flowering and living, there is no need. When you don't live, the same energy goes sour. The same energy which would have become a flower is stuck; not being allowed to bloom, it becomes a thorn in the heart. It is the same energy.

If people can dance a little more, sing a little more, be a little more crazy, their energy will be flowing more, and their problems will by and by disappear. Hence I insist so much on dance. Dance to orgasm; let the whole energy become dance, and suddenly you will see that you don't have any head – the energy stuck in the head is moving all around, creating beautiful patterns, pictures, movement. When you dance there comes a moment when your body is no longer a rigid thing, it becomes flexible, flowing. When you dance there comes a moment when your boundary is no longer so clear; you melt and merge with the cosmos, the boundaries are mixing.

Watch a dancer – you will see that he has become an energy phenomenon, no longer in a fixed form, no longer in a frame. He is flowing out of his frame, out of his form, and becoming more alive, more and more alive. But only if you dance yourself will you know what really happens. The head inside disappears; you are a child once again. Then you don't create any problems.

Live, dance, eat, sleep, do things as totally as possible. And remember again and again: whenever you catch yourself creating any problem, slip out of it, immediately. Once you get into the problem then a solution will be needed. And even if you find a solution, out of

that solution a thousand and one problems will arise again. Once you miss the first step, you are in the trap. Whenever you see that now you are slipping into a problem, catch hold of yourself, run, jump, dance, but don't get into the problem. Do something immediately so that the energy that was creating the problems becomes fluid, unfrozen, melts, goes back to the cosmos.

Those who live close to nature don't have many problems. I have come across indigenous groups in India who say they don't dream at all. Freud would not be able to believe that it is possible. They don't dream, but if sometimes somebody dreams, it is a rare phenomenon; the whole village fasts, prays to God. Something has gone wrong; something wrong has happened...a man has dreamed.

It never happens in their tribe because they live so totally that nothing is left in the head to be completed during sleep. Whatsoever you leave incomplete has to be completed in your dreams; whatsoever you have not lived remains as a hangover and completes itself in the mind – that's

what a dream is. The whole day you go on thinking. The thinking simply shows that you have more energy than you use for living; you have more energy than your so-called life needs.

You are missing real life. Use more energy. Fresh energies will be flowing. Don't be a miser. Use them today; let today be complete unto itself; tomorrow will take care of itself, don't be worried about tomorrow. The worry, the problem, the anxiety, all simply show one thing: that you are not living rightly, that your life is not yet a celebration, a dance, a festive – hence all the problems. Ancient Music In the Pines, courtesy Osho International Foundation, www.osho.com



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Delicious Food For The Soul

Discourse: Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

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take it away from you. Nobody can make you miserable or take away the joy from your life. Life assumes another dimension suddenly once you glimpse something inside that is expanding. You don't have to leave things here and go. Just being amidst all the noise and still recognising that beauty is so wonderful, so fascinating, right here and now and that is meditation, which is supreme prayer.

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Heaven & Hell

Actual heaven is the predominance of the mode of goodness, whereas hell is the predominance of ignorance.

Uddhava Gita



Heaven and hell are not very distant, they are neighbours; only a small fence divides them. You can jump that fence, even without a gate. You go on jumping from this to that. In the morning you may be in heaven; by evening you are in hell – this moment heaven, that moment hell. It is just an attitude, a state of your mind, just how you are feeling.

Osho



Hell and heaven should not be looked upon as being places; and, though, from the subjective point of view, they mean a great deal for the individualised soul, they are both illusions within the greater illusion of the phenomenal world.

Meher Baba



To different minds, the same world is a hell, and a heaven.

Ralph W Emerson

Interplay Of Culture And Civilisation

Shri Shri Anandamurti

By society, normally we mean a collective body of people, but that's not the spirit of the word "society". Samaj or society implies an action of 'samanam ejate' or moving together. We come across groups of people in buses, trams and trains and they are moving together; but this occasional movement cannot be termed society, either.

Being inspired by a common ideology, when different individuals move towards a common goal and become active for its achievement, this can be called a society. Social advancement, which is a type of social action, means that the tie of mutual unity among the persons moving together has become strong. How can we achieve social consciousness? Social consciousness implies the influence of a particular ideology and a new awakening among people due to this ideology. This depends on so many factors, the most important of which is good leadership.

A good leader has a strong personality, and if this is lacking, a strong society cannot be formed, forget social revolution! Two essential factors are, a great ideology and a great personality. Then a true society could be formed. The seed of social consciousness is inherent in the mantra, 'Sam-gacchadhvam samvadadhvam' – let everybody move together, let everybody think together. This is possible through spiritual practice.

Where there is no such mantra, there is no ideology, and where there is no ideology, life is a goal-less voyage. Human expressions are multilateral; our ways of life are multifarious. When different expressions of life come together it's called samskriti or culture. The ways of expression may differ from one group of people to another: some eat with their hands, others use spoons, yet others use sticks,

but everyone has to eat. Human culture is, therefore, one and indivisible.

Expressions in life may increase with intellectual development. Those who live in less developed conditions might not have opportunities to express themselves through fine art, literature and music. There could be a greater spectrum of expression when conditions are more comfortable. The greater the variety of expression, the greater the chance of being called "more cultured".

Where expressions are diverted to crude objectivities it is called krishti or crude manifestations of expression, which is also part of samskriti. Samskriti is the sum total of both crude and subtle manifestations of expression. Krishti may differ from one group of people to another but human culture on the whole is one. However, cultural expressions and civilisation are not synonymous. Where there is control and rationality in the way we express ourselves, there is also civilisation. For example, the way we eat is a cultural expression. Those who rationally think that overeating is bad might think that exercising restraint in eating is to be civilised.

Culturally advanced people may not necessarily be civilised if there is lack of rationality, reasoning and control. Similarly, a so-called culturally backward people may not necessarily be socially backward. From ancient times we have struggled against obstacles. Struggle is the essence of life. With intellectual development there is cultural progress, but restraint and rationality have to be exercised on cultural expressions. Hence the need for constructive ideology that engenders evolution of advanced civilisations.

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Three-day Ananda Marga Dharma Mahasammelan, May 18-20, Ananda Nagar, Purulia, West Bengal.



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Tathagata's Wisdom

The Great Compassionate
Heart is the essence
of Buddhahood.

Gandavyuha Sutra



This is peace, this is the
excellent, namely the calm
of all impulses, the casting
out of all "basis", the
extinction of craving, dis-
passion, stopping, nirvana.

Anguttara Nikaya v 322



O good man! Compassion is
the Buddha Nature of all
beings./ Such a Buddha Na-
ture is long overshadowed by
illusion./ That is why beings
cannot see./ The Buddha
Nature is Compassion.

*Mahaparinirvana
Sutra 259*



The world exists because of
causal actions, all things are
produced by causal actions
and all beings are governed
and bound by causal actions.

They are fixed like the
rolling wheel of a cart, fixed
by the pin of its axle shaft.

Sutta Nipata 654



The traveller has reached
the end of the journey! In
the freedom of the infinite
he is free from all sorrows.

Dhammapada

Tomorrow is
Buddha Purnima.

Thich Nhat Hanh

In western philosophy, the term "being-in-itself" is very close to the Buddhist term "suchness" – reality as it is free from conceptions or grasping. You cannot grasp it, because grasping reality with concepts and notions is like catching space with a net. So enter reality in a non-conceptual instant. The Buddha handed us an instrument to do this. If you continue to cling even to Buddhist notions and concepts, you miss the opportunity. You are carrying the raft on your shoulders. Do not be a prisoner of any doctrine or ideology, even Buddhist ones.

Our notion of being is dualistic, the opposite of the notion of non-being. The reality of being that the Buddha tries to convey is not the opposite of non-being. When he says "Self", it is not the opposite of anything.

In Mahayana Buddhism, we use anti-notions to help us get rid of notions. If you get caught by the notion of being, the notion of emptiness is there to rescue you. But if you forget that true emptiness is filled with everything, you will be caught by your notion of emptiness and bitten by the snake. All other notions can be healed by the notion of emptiness, but when you are caught in the notion of emptiness, the disease is incurable.

The belief that the Self is there before i was born and will continue after i die is a belief in permanence. The opposite belief, that after you die you enter absolute nothingness, is a belief in annihilation. These views are discussed in the Sutra on Knowing – the better way to catch a snake. Take care not to fall into either trap – the belief in a permanent Self, whether great or small, or the belief in annihilation, becoming nothing. These two

Is Buddha Alive Or Dead?

notions must be transcended. When you are caught in one notion or the other, you get bitten by the snake over and over again.

One day i was contemplating a stick of burning incense. The smoke coming off its tip was creating many beautiful forms in the air. It seemed alive, really there. I perceived an existence, a being, a life, and i sat quietly enjoying myself and the "Self" of the incense stick.

I enjoyed the smoke as it continued to drift up creating various forms. I used my left hand to "catch" the smoke. The last moment the stick was burning was especially beautiful. When there was no more incense at the other end, there was more oxygen on both sides, so it burned most intensely for a moment, revealing a bright red colour. I looked at it with all my concentration. It was a parinirvana, a great extinction. Where had the flame gone?

When a person is about to die, he often becomes very alert at that last moment of life and then fades away, just like the stick of incense. Where has the soul gone? I had several other sticks of incense, and i knew that if, at that last moment, i took another stick of incense and touched the first stick with it, the flame would have continued onto the new stick, and the life of the incense would have continued. It was only a matter of fuel, or conditions... If I feed one stick after another to the fuel, is the life of the incense eternal?

Is the Buddha alive or dead? It is a matter of fuel. Perhaps you are the fuel, and you continue the life of the Buddha. From Cultivating the Mind of Love.

www.ahimsatrust.org, ahimsa.trust@gmail.com

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SACRED SPACE

Cosmic Network

Far away, in the heavenly abode of the great god Indra, there is a wonderful net which has been hung by some cunning artificer in such a manner that it stretches out infinitely in all directions. The artificer has hung a single glittering jewel in each eye of the net, and since the net itself is infinite in dimension, the jewels are infinite in number.



There hang the jewels, glittering like stars of the first magnitude, a wonderful sight to behold. If we now look closely at any one of the jewels for inspection, we will discover that in its polished surface are reflected all the other jewels in the net, infinite in number. Not only that, there is an infinite reflection process occurring.



This symbolises our world where every sentient being (and thing) is interrelated to one another.

Avatamsaka Sutra

Principle Of Dependent Arising

Dipankar Khanna

The principle governing pratityasamutpada or dependent arising – also called interdependent origination and conditioned co-production – is a cornerstone in Buddhist philosophical thought. Buddhist scripture informs us that by comprehending the doctrine, sentient beings begin to understand the nature of suffering and its causes in cyclic existence – first and second noble truths (suffering and its cause). With the correct view of emptiness, free from the elaborations of the two extremes, they can practice the correct dharma and strive on the path leading to cessation of suffering – fourth and third noble truths.

Indic philosophical systems were able to absorb and assimilate the religious symbolism of their vast pantheon of gods and goddesses both in the Vedic as well as the Buddhist Tantric traditions, to facilitate their quest for knowledge of the ultimate nature of reality as it exists, at an experiential level.

Ancient Greeks and latter day European philosophers turned to scientific inference and digressed in their search for the noumenal at the cost of the phenomenal pebbles that they gathered as playthings without any hope of a direct first-hand perception of reality.

However, with the radical departure from the rigid structures of the classical Newtonian Physics and the dawn of the new era in science, in the field of Quantum Mechanics, very exciting possibilities have arisen equating and reconciling certain scientific behavioural theories with eastern mystical perceptions.

While classical physics “predicts events”, quantum physics ‘predicts probabilities’ and possibilities. This not only exposes the com-

plex nature of quantum mechanics, but also the law of cause and effect and the doctrine of interdependent origination since “it needs to be stressed that this theory of pratityasamutpada is of far greater generality and scope than the common sense notion of causality”.

According to classical Newtonian physics there are parameters for a given experiment and based on the fundamental scientific laws a particular cause produces a certain effect. For example, if a grain of sand enters into an oyster it undergoes a metamorphosis and develops into a pearl. We can even statistically ascertain that from a total oyster population of 10,000 about one-tenth or 1,000 pearls are formed in a given period of time. This is

cause and effect but with probability and possibility outcome we have to be prepared to accept that we can never know, specifically, which out of those 10,000 oysters are the chosen 1,000 which will produce the pearls. Then there is also the proportion of the pearl size, weight, texture, shape, colour which has to be contended with.

When we consider the lives of individuals with thoughts, emotions and idiosyncrasies, in relation to an ever-changing scenario, pertaining to their personal economic, social, cultural and religious orders; and which aspects are a part of everyday living; the quantum of factors at play are too many and cannot be attributed to “mere” cause and effect. For just as a piece of fabric has a weave, waft and weft, the play of interdependence of interdependent origination is an intricate, infinitely interwoven phenomenon – unfathomable, complex and mysterious – and requires an enlightened mind to unravel and attain to the state of the transcendently realised.

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Facing Failure

Never mind failures; they are quite natural, they are the beauty of life. What would be life without them? It would not be worth having if it were not for struggles. Where would be the poetry of life?

Swami Vivekananda



Why do we fail? Is it because we are unlucky? Is it because we have not worked very hard?

No! It is for a different reason that we experience failure. It is for the strengthening of our consciousness that at times, God grants us defeat.

Sri Chinmoy



Life has meaning only in the struggle. Triumph or defeat is in the hands of the Gods. So let us celebrate the struggle!

Swami Sivananda



But there is suffering in life, and there are defeats. No one can avoid them.

But it's better to lose some of the battles in the struggles for your dreams than to be defeated without ever knowing what you're fighting for.

Paulo Coelho

Relationship With The Self

Satsang: Swami Sukhabodhananda

My sister thinks if she keeps everyone around her happy, it will automatically bring her happiness. So, she works hard for others' happiness but ignores her own. Is she right?

Happiness is a context of being alive with the moment. Even a problem can make us alive. When you define happiness as 'when my desire is fulfilled i will be happy', you remain unhappy because problems, like the ocean's waves, will keep coming. One has to enjoy despite the waves; one has to be happy despite problems. We should change our definition of problems as pain. Out of joy one should live life not *for* joy. Be happy and make others happy.

Why do we become restless when alone? How to become restful in solitude?

We are restless with ourselves because the self we know is empty, shallow, void and unhappy. Face this fact. We try to be busy because we want to avoid our inner void. When you are alone, you tend to feel fear, anger, disappointment and insecurity. And when you think only of yourself, you become greedy. So learn to heal your inner hurts, handle your greed wisely, manage your inner insecurity and transform your anger. Also learn to meditate. Once you learn to manage your life wisely, you will be at peace.

How should i shield myself from the behaviour of those around me?

More than the experience it is how you frame the experience which matters. We tend to frame an experience with hurt and expectation. First, experience the experience of the other. Then learn from that,

including from good and bad people. When you meet negative people, learn more deeply. See how their psychology is working. See how they are a victim of their habits; how they are ignorant and insensitive to live a positive life. Perhaps they have wrong role models. Learn from the mistakes of others. That is your great challenge. You can withstand the turbulence if you can learn from others and deal with them in a way that you see it as a challenge and not as a nuisance.

Why should i work hard to be good when those who are not are having a great time?

Look deeply and you will realise that people who do wrong also suffer. An underworld person may appear strong but he goes through a lot of fear and tension. He has to be alert all the time or he may get killed. This in itself is a kind of punishment. Whether a criminal gets caught or not, he has to be manipulative and doubt every person and this involves lot of psychological stress. Look at punishment from a bigger perspective... Nature has its own way of punishing and rewarding.

We're told we should forgive. When i do that, the other person benefits but i am called a doormat.

Forgiving is also good to the one who forgives. Because the moment you forgive, you let go of the injustice done to you. To nurse a hurt is self-damaging. When i forgive, i become stronger for i am no longer a victim and so there is no longer pain. How can i be a doormat if i have kept myself clean through forgiveness? Forgiveness is like taking a psychological bath, it keeps you fresh.

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Ends And Means

The end of life is to be like unto God; and the soul following God, will be like unto Him; He being the beginning, middle and end of all things.

Socrates



The end may justify the means as long as there is something that justifies the end.

Leon Trotsky



Pure goals can never justify impure or violent action...They say the means are after all just means. I would say means are after all everything. As the means, so the end....If we take care of the means we are bound to reach the end sooner or later.

MK Gandhi



A man wants to earn money in order to be happy, and his whole effort and the best of a life are devoted to the earning of that money. Happiness is forgotten; the means are taken for the end.

Albert Camus



Goals are a means to an end, not the ultimate purpose of our lives.

Anthony Robbins

Repentance And Right Action

MPK Kutty

To be the No. 1 – this is what seems to make life worth living for most people today. However, if not qualified by right values, success could lead to downfall. “Work hard, study hard, nothing comes easy...there are no short cuts. No matter how menial the job, the important thing is to do it well.” Charles Colson recalls his father's words: “Tell the truth always, for lies destroy you.”

His was a family of small means. To meet expenses, his mother would sell off household items. One day, Colson returned from school to see strangers carrying away chairs from the living room. He determined that he would be an achiever.

Success in academics, a stint with the Marine Corps and later as campaigner for President Nixon, Colson tasted status and power and this emboldened him to often disregard ethics in getting things done.

Eventually Colson went to prison after pleading guilty to Watergate-related charges. In prison he underwent a transformation. “I shudder to think what I would have been if I had not gone to prison,” he was to remark later.

The accusations levelled against him as the hatchet man of Nixon and the humiliation made him “broken inside” though he put on a tough exterior. A friend gave him a book by CS Lewis that spoke of spiritual issues.

He read: “...it is pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and family. Other vices may sometimes bring people together; you may find good fellowship, jokes and friendliness among drunken or unchaste people. But pride always means enmity; not only enmity between man and man, but enmity to God.”

Looking back, he found it was pride that had propelled him through life. And he recognised, too, that “pride is spiritual cancer. It eats up the very possibility of love, contentment or even common sense.”

Sensitised by repentance, he could now empathise with the fellow prisoners trapped by circumstances and marked by tragedy and injustice. Haunted by the desperation and hopelessness he saw Colson knew he must do something to help those left behind once he was out of prison. To this end, he set up the International Prison Fellowship ministries in 1976 now operating in more than hundred countries.

Colson received 15 honorary doctorates, and in 1993 was awarded the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, the world's largest annual award – amounting to over \$1 million – in the field of religion, given to one who “has made an exceptional contribution to affirming life's spiritual dimension”. He donated this prize to further the work of Prison Fellowship, as he did all his speaking fees and royalties. In 2008, he was awarded the Presidential Citizens' Medal by then president George W Bush.

Colson's life is a reminder to those, in and out of office, of seductions of power and rewards of service. His now famous redemption story written in Born Again, a best-seller, will remain an inspiration to all those holding top offices anywhere in the world. Power often corrupts the one who wields it; but God does give another chance to those who are willing to repent and reorder their lives based on moral and ethical standards.

Power could do much good if used for common benefit in the conviction that leaders are here “to serve and not to be served”. Servant leadership is the answer.

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Creative World

To be creative is not merely to produce poems, or statues, or children; it is to be in that state in which truth can come into being. Truth comes into being when there is a complete cessation of thought; and thought ceases only when the self is absent, when the mind has ceased to create, that is, when it is no longer caught in its own pursuits.

JKrishnamurti



Be creative. Don't be worried about what you are doing – one has to do many things – but do everything creatively, with devotion. Then your work becomes worship.

Then whatsoever you do is a prayer. And whatsoever you do is an offering at the altar.

Osho



There are painters who transform the sun into a yellow spot, but there are others who with the help of their art and their intelligence, transform a yellow spot into the sun.

Pablo Picasso

Sadhguru

One poornima or full moon night some 2,500 years ago, something tremendous happened. After almost eight years of intense sadhana, Gautama Siddhartha had become so weak that his body was almost at the point of death. He came to the swift-flowing Niranjana, a large stream with knee-height water. He tried to cross the river, but halfway, his body became so weak that he could not take another step. But he was not the kind to give up. He held on to a dead branch and just stood there.

It is said that he stood like this for hours. Suddenly, he realised that what he had been seeking was actually within. "So why struggle? All that is needed is absolute willingness, and it is right here. Why am I searching everywhere?" Once he realised this, he found that little extra ounce of energy to take the next few steps, walk across the river and sit down under the now-famous Bodhi tree. He sat with the determination that "unless the ultimate happens to me, I will not move. Either I will get up enlightened or I will die in this posture". And in one moment, he was there. If it becomes the only priority, one moment is all it takes.

In his own silent way, Gautama changed the world forever. His flowering on that full moon night, 2,500 years ago, has made a significant change for spiritual seekers, whoever or wherever they are.

Any poornima is significant. For one, the full moon has a certain aesthetic quality which improves your receptivity. If you look at anything beautiful, your receptivity to that object increases. The moment you look at anything that you consider ugly, your

Full Moon Enhances Your Qualities

receptivity to it goes down. Another aspect is, on poornima, the planet is in a certain position in relation to the moon. The vibration and feel of the moon is very different when it is full. And its magnetic pull is also different at that time. It is working upon the surface of the planet which is exposed to the moon. When there is such a natural pull, since your spine is vertical, there is a tendency for your energies to move upward. That means, blood and prana, the fundamental life energies, flow in a different way. Just as tides rise higher on that night because of the moon's gravitational pull, your blood is also being pulled up and the circulation of blood increases in your brain.

This upsurge of energy enhances your qualities, whatever they may be. If you are mentally imbalanced, it will make you even more imbalanced. If you are meditative, it makes you more meditative. If you are loving, it makes you even more loving. If you are fearful, it makes you even more fearful. The same happens with other qualities in you too, but most may not

be sensitive enough to notice it.

For seekers, especially those on the meditative path, it is more conducive to meditate on those nights because without an upsurge of energy, without a heightened sense of energy, there is no question of awareness. When there is a heightened sense of energy in your system, what you call awareness will come naturally to you. So we just want to make use of this natural phenomenon which is occurring on that night. So poornima is giving you a free ride of energy and awareness.

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Free Of Fear

If you completely put aside every form of belief, then there is no fear whatsoever.

Jiddu Krishnamurti



Don't move the way fear makes you move.

Move the way love makes you move.

Move the way joy makes you move.

Osho



Fear is there simply because you are not living with life, you are living in your mind.

Sadhguru



All your fears should be examined so that you can remain fearless as long as you live.

Swami Rama



Fear arises through identification with form, whether it is a material possession, physical body, social role, self-image, thought or an emotion. You are trapped in object consciousness, unaware of the dimension of inner space which alone is true freedom.

Eckhart Tolle

Mirror, Mirror On The Wall

Neellam Nanwani

Do you suffer from low self-esteem? Do you wallow in self-pity? You don't have to. We are conditioned to believe that loving oneself is being selfish and, therefore, we experience a sense of guilt.

Loving your own self doesn't mean ignoring your imperfections or being selfish – it doesn't mean that you say, "I am perfect and don't need to change." Loving yourself is not a selfish act. It does not imply that you must ignore the needs of others. Nor does loving oneself need to involve doing so with arrogance.

Instead, to love yourself involves personal awareness. Self-love means you pay attention to your feelings, your perspective. You are fully aware of your own needs while recognising the needs of others. If you don't feel fulfilled within, how can you properly reach out and become deeply fulfilling to others?

If you cannot love and respect yourself for the person you are, how will others accept and love you? If I don't enjoy my own company, how can I expect others to find me interesting? Ask: Could you live with yourself on a deserted island?

Self-love means loving and accepting yourself the way you are, while acknowledging fully the changes that you need to make in your life. Recognise the areas in your life that you need to improve upon or enhance, and all the while, do so without beating yourself up for it.

It's human to err, to make mistakes, to know defeat and to face failures. We grow from this. However, what is important is not to indulge in self-blame but to accept what needs to change, while acknowledging and

respecting what is good in you. Release the past and move on.

When you look at yourself in the mirror, what do you feel? What or who do you see? Can you look in the mirror and say, "I love you exactly the way you are?" Can you say, with conviction: "I love you, because I recognise that you are unique and wonderful?" Can you forgive yourself for not being what you want to be? Can you forgive others for the hurt and the pain they caused you?

By forgiving yourself and others, you begin to feel grateful for what is rather than running for what should be. With forgiveness, you can experience the beauty of the present moment. Forgiveness is one of the essential ingredients of accepting and loving your unique self.

We often feel that forgiving and letting go is for others. We forget that when we hold on to the pain and the grief and hurt caused by others – and if don't forgive – it is like holding hot coal in our hands, refusing to throw it.

Do you trust your abilities and know what is good, unique and wonderful in you? If your answer is in the affirmative, it means you are manifesting a life of your dreams. If negative, then you need to delve deeper into your mind and soul to find what is stopping you from living your dreams.

We talk about loving others and of doing things for others but, if a part of you, somewhere deep down, is aching, frustrated and belittled, how can you do justice to others? So your first responsibility is to your own self?

Reach within and find the real you; feel assured that you have great potential. Use it.

The writer is a past life regression therapist. neellamnawani@yahoo.in



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Rabindranath
Tagore said...

This is my prayer to Thee,
my Lord – strike, strike
at the root of penury in
my heart./ Give me the
strength lightly to bear my
joys and sorrows./ Give
me the strength to make
my love fruitful in service.

Gitanjali



My dearest life, i know
you are not mine forever;
but do love me even if it's
for this moment. After
that i shall vanish into
the forest where you cast
me, i won't ask anyone
for anything again.
Give me something that
can last me till i die.

A Grain of Sand



Clouds come floating
into my life, no longer
to carry rain or usher
storm, but to add colour
to my sunset sky.

Stray Birds



I am willing to serve my
country, but my worship i
reserve for 'right' which
is far greater than my
country. To worship my
country as a god is to
bring a curse upon it.

Home And World

Today is Tagore's
birth anniversary.

When Nothing Became Something

Andrew Cohen

When you take the perennial meditative journey to the depths of your own self, you discover what it was like *before the beginning*. You come to rest in the timeless empty void before the Universe was born, which the mystics call the ground of Being. When you taste the profound freedom that is the inherent nature of that primordial ground, it can seem like the end of the path. Where else could there possibly be for you to go? The very notion of seeking for liberation, for enlightenment, for meaning or purpose seems absurd. The question, *who am i?* is answered before it is asked. And the question, *why am i here?*, simply does not arise.

In traditional enlightenment, this is the end of the path. But the journey of *evolutionary* enlightenment does not end here. Why? Because the cosmic experiment that is life did not end here. If that empty ground, where every question is answered, was all there was to know and to discover, why would the universe exist? Why did something come from nothing?

This is not an abstract philosophical question but a profound spiritual contemplation that can take you to the essence of what it means to be alive. Why *did* something come from nothing...and become light, energy, matter, life, consciousness, and *you* – 14 billion years later reading these words? *Why are you here?*

If the eternal perfection that is the Source of everything knows no desire, why would the universe have emerged? If the ground of all things has no impulse but to *be*, why did it *become*? But it did. And thanks to evolutionary science, we can behold just how far this miraculous explosion of Becoming

has brought us in the 14 billion years since that initial burst. We can reflect on its awe-inspiring progress, and wonder at its ever-greater complexity and integration and creativity. And we can ask ourselves, why did all of this come from nothing?

You don't need a powerful telescope to see all the way back to the Big Bang – you can *go there*, right now, in your very own experience.

The Big Bang is not just a metaphor or a disputed scientific theory about what occurred 14 billion years ago. It's happening *right now*. Something is coming from nothing every second. You might not be conscious of it, but it's true. Your own experience of action and reaction is not unbroken – there are countless moments of zero between each and every thought, every impulse, and every response. If you slow your experience down, and keep slowing it down, you'll start to see that there is a vast chasm of empty space that is the foundation of everything that is occurring, the ground out of which each impulse arises. Even as you are aware of the body, of the passing of time and the movement of thought, beneath it all you can become conscious of this current of stillness that is the ground of Being.

Because you can locate that empty ground in your very own experience, you can also locate the seed of everything that came out of that nothingness. The essence of evolutionary enlightenment is found in that precise moment when nothing became something. When you contemplate the ground of Being, you can begin to intuit for yourself what that very moment must have been like. From the writer's Evolutionary Enlightenment: A New Path to Spiritual Awakening.

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Collective Consciousness

Meet together, speak together, let your minds be of one accord, as the gods of old, being of one mind, accepted their share of the sacrifice...Let your aims be common, and your hearts of one accord, and all of you be of one mind, so you may live well together.

Rig Veda



Happy is the unity of the Sangha. Happy is the discipline of the united ones.

Dhammapada 194



And when a company meets together in one of the houses of God to pore over the Book of God and to study it together among themselves, the Shechinah comes down to them and mercy overshadows them, the angels surround them, and God remembers them among them that are His.

*Forty Hadith of
an-Nawawi 36*



The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society forms a determinate system with a life of its own. It can be termed the collective or creative consciousness.

Emile Durkheim

Mind And Heart At Loggerheads

Discourse: Avtaar Meher Baba

In the life of most persons the mind and heart are at loggerheads, and the conflict between the two creates confusion. The mind, in its objective handling of the material world, is saturated with experiences of multiplicity and separateness, and so feeds egocentric tendencies which divide us, making us selfish and possessive. But the heart, which experiences the glow of love, gets a glimpse of the unity of the spirit; and so seeks expression through self-giving tendencies which unite us, making us selfless and generous.

When the mind encroaches upon the province of heart, it does so by requiring assurance or conviction as a condition which must be fulfilled before there is a release of love. But love is nothing if it is not spontaneous. It cannot be a conclusion of reasoning. It is not a fruit of the spirit of bargain.

If you want to be certain about the object of love before giving your love, it is only a form of calculated selfishness. The mind is a treasure house of learning; but the heart is a treasure house of spiritual wisdom. Mind cannot tell you which things are worth having; it can only tell you how to achieve ends accepted from non-intellectual sources. In most persons the mind accepts ends from the promptings of the heart, which it contributes to the life of the spirit.

Spiritual understanding is born of harmony between mind and heart. Harmony of mind and heart does not require mixing up of their functions. It does not imply cross-functioning but cooperative functioning. Their functions are neither identical nor coordinated. Mind and heart must of course be "balanced". But this balance cannot be secured by pitching

mind against heart or by pitching heart against mind. It can be attained not through mechanical tension but through intelligent adjustment. Mind and heart might be said to be balanced when they serve their proper purpose and when they perform their respective functions without erring this way or that way; and it is only when they are so balanced can there be true harmony between them. Such harmony of mind and heart is the most important condition of the integral, undivided life of spiritual understanding.

Though mind and heart are involved in allegiance to dogmas and creeds, *both* function in such case under the serious handicap of suspension of thought. Hence dogmas and creeds do not contribute to unmixed good.

The mind has been emancipated from domination of uncultured emotion, but this is often achieved by sacrificing cooperation of the heart. If the results of critical thought are to be spiritually fruitful, they must again invade and recapture the heart so as to enlist its cooperative functioning.

As long as the human mind does not directly experience Ultimate Reality as it is, it is baffled in every attempt to explain the origin and the purpose of creation.

Do not listen to the voice of the mind. Listen to the voice of the heart. Mind wavers; heart does not falter. Mind fears; heart is not daunted. Mind is the house of doubts, reasonings and theories; heart, when purified, becomes the dwelling of Beloved God. So get your heart rid of low desires, temptations and selfishness, and God will manifest in you as your own Self.

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There Are Three Kinds Of People

Deepak Pathak

The law of energy conservation states that energy can be neither created nor destroyed but can be changed from one form to another. For instance, chemical energy can become kinetic energy. There is no conflict or effort needed when energy is made to pass from source to destination in its current form. The difficulty arises only when it has to be converted from one form to another. Once these energies are controlled and directed in a desired way, they improve our physical conveniences.

Extending this law to our own consciousness, we come to observe that the law works the same in all dimensions. In non-awareness people do not respond but react to negativity; they dislike and nurture it for some time and then propagate it to others in the same form. The next receiver follows the same formula and there is a chain reaction.

Realised sages who are wise and have the power of discrimination could help us convert negativity into positivity. Here also the law works similarly and you first face intense resistance. The blueness of the sky is an optical illusion; similarly, the negativity we experience is also delusion because essentially, there exists the same positivity within. However, just as an inebriated person enjoys his deluded mind, the ignorant enjoy their pathetic condition. The ignorant would take their own sweet time to understand the reality based on their prakriti but thoughtful people must keep influencing them - preferably by example - not to tread the wrong path based on conditioning and pleasure.

The deluded or the ignorant would try to achieve any goal with less physical, mental or spiritual effort. They lack restraint and are unable to comprehend the feelings of others; they are arrogant and lethargic.

The wise, on the other hand, would always follow sage suggestions knowingly or unknowingly and display sattvic qualities like a penetrating intellect, alertness and fearlessness. The wise are always focussed on bettering their surroundings and fellow beings.

Generally, everyone looks up to the sattvic kind of people but finds oneself following the deluded group on account of fear and misplaced attachment which causes them to be fragmented from within. Such people can be invariably seen engaging in pointless arguments and nothing else. When they are tormented enough they comfort themselves by deriving good qualities from outside like movies, exciting trips and some vague experiences. But what is not their own nature will not soothe them for long and their life will not be vibrant until they start living using a wise and fearless nature.

Ultimately, we have three groups with different goals. The deluded group says: This is my duty to do and spread negativity and I enjoy doing it to the core.

The wise group says: This is my duty to do and spread positivity and I enjoy doing that to the fullest.

The general group says: This is my duty to save what I have; I enjoy being motivated by the wise ones and feel scared of the deluded ones.

We all interact and conflict with these different groups at work, home and any other situation. These conflicts have been there for long and are likely to continue into eternity. The purpose of discussing these issues could be seen as a way to introduce us to our real nature. The only expectation is to live our life in unbroken awareness, spontaneity and vibrancy. If we are overflowing with positivity then we must charge the neutrals and help the negatives to be at least neutral.

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THE
SPEAKING
TREE

SACRED SPACE

Yoga And You

The way to true yoga is found by dwelling in God and remaining detached in the midst of worldly attachments.

Guru Nanak



Yoga is experienced in that mind which has ceased to identify itself with its vacillating waves of perception...

When this happens then the seer is revealed, resting in its own essential nature, and one realises the True Self.

Patanjali



Health is a state of complete harmony of the body, mind and spirit. When one is free from physical disabilities and mental distractions, the gates of the soul open.

BKS Iyengar



Yoga is self-conquest. Self-conquest is God-realisation. He who practises yoga does two things with one stroke: he simplifies his whole life and he gets free access to the Divine.

Sri Chinmoy

Love Is The Only Religion

Discourse: Sri Sathya Sai Baba

God is inscrutable. He cannot be realised in the outer objective world; He is in the heart of every being. Seek God in the depths of your Self.

Who can affirm that God is not of this form or with this attribute? Each one can acquire from the vast expanse of the ocean only as much as can be contained in the vessel he carries to its shore. From that quantity, they can grasp but little of that immensity.

Each religion defines God within the limits it demarcates and then claims to have grasped Him, forgetting that God is all forms and all names, all attributes and all assertions. The religion of humanity is the sum and substance of all these partial faiths; for there is only one religion and that is the religion of Love. Various religions and faiths that feel separate and distinct are all fostered by a single stream of love.

There are many who observe my actions and start declaring that my nature is such and such. They are unable to gauge the power of Sai which is limitless; It manifests forever. All forms of 'power' are resident in this Sai palm.

But those who profess to have understood me, the scholars, the yogis, the pundits, the jnanis, all of them are aware only of the least important, the casual external manifestation of an infinitesimal part of that power, namely, the "miracles"! They have not desired to contact the source of all power and all wisdom that is available here at Brindavan. They are satisfied when they secure a chance to exhibit their book-learning and parade their scholarship in Vedic lore, not realising that the person from whom the Vedas emanated is in the midst, for their

sake. They even ask, in their pride, for a few more chances!

This has been the case in all ages. Therefore, when you speak about these 'miracles', I laugh to myself out of pity that you allow yourself so easily to lose the precious awareness of my reality.

My power is immeasurable; my truth is inexplicable, unfathomable. I am announcing this about me, for the need has arisen. But what I am doing now is only the gift of a 'visiting card'!

My grace is ever available to devotees who have steady love and faith. Since I move freely among them, talking and singing, even intellectuals are unable to grasp my truth, power, glory, or my real task as Avatar. I can solve any problem, however knotty. Do not attempt to know me through external eyes. When you go to a temple and stand before the image of God, you pray with closed eyes, don't you? Why? Because you feel that the inner eye of wisdom alone can reveal Him to you. Therefore, do not crave from me trivial material objects; but, crave for me, and you will be rewarded.

Not that you should not receive whatever objects I give as sign of grace out of the fullness of Love.

I shall tell you why I give these rings, talismans and rosaries. It is to signal the bond between me and those to whom they are given. When calamity befalls them, the article comes to me in a flash and returns in a flash taking from me the remedial grace of protection. That Grace is available to all who call on me in any name or form, not merely to those who wear these gifts. Love is the bond that wins grace.

I am the embodiment of divine love; love is my instrument.



THE SPEAKING TREE

SACRED SPACE

You And Society

Selfless social service can
bring enduring benefits.

I want students to feel
happy going to school.

I must ensure that they
have facilities.

*Sachin Tendulkar
in an interview*



We are society; we are not
independent of society. We

are the result of envi-
ronment – of our religion,

education, climate, food

we eat, reactions, the innumerable repetitive activities that we indulge in every day. That is our life.

And the society in which
we live is part of that life.

Society is cooperation.

Jiddu Krishnamurti



Society wants you to efface
your individuality completely; society does not like

individuals. It likes you to
become a member of

society, not an individual.

Osho



I truly believe that individuals can make a difference in society. Love and kindness are the very basis of

society. If we lose these
feelings, society will face

tremendous difficulties;
the survival of humanity

will be endangered.

The XIV Dalai Lama

Two Paths, One Destination

Pranav Khullar

Sankara and Ramanuja represent two fundamental speculative positions of Vedantic thought. Their road maps to the Absolute reflect the dialectic between being and becoming. Sankara's monistic advaita points to One higher reality in which the entire material dimension of life is subsumed – the being aspect of existence which one aspires to experience. On the other hand, Ramanuja's vishisht advaita holds that the sensory-material dimension of that higher reality is equally valid and serves its purpose through adoration of the Absolute – this existential journey of becoming to be enjoyed as much as the state of being.

The commentaries of Sankara and Ramanuja were essentially treatises on the Brahma Sutras of Vyasa – 555 sutras, aphorisms containing the quintessence of Upanishadic-Vedantic thought.

Their deliberations are triggered by the great call of the first sutra itself:

"Athato brahma jignasa" – now therefore the enquiry into Brahmn – a call to free enquiry which sets the tone for all speculation. Both based their

deliberations on the same text, branching out in different interpretations, Sankara upholding a monistic view and Ramanuja posing a theistic-existential formulation of reality.

Sankara's appeal lay as much in his erudition and dialectical skill as in his being a child prodigy. He lived for barely 30 years, yet he set ablaze the intellectual world of his times, redefining, revamping and revitalising old concepts not only with great strength but humility, too. From the backwaters of Kalady to the snowy crests of Kedarnath, he took on scholars, sages and savants, in what he believed to be his spiritual mission, engaging them in scholarly debates to establish his viewpoint.

Ramanuja, who lived to be more than 100 years, was more deeply rooted in the theological traditions, and sought inspiration in Vaishnavite theology as well as in the mystical fervour of the 12 Alvar poet-saints of south India. It was his lifelong mission to deconstruct the notion of the Absolute as a personal God, which differed fundamentally with the monistic position of Sankara.

Ramanuja was inspired to write his commentary on the Brahma Sutras at the time of the death of his guru when his attention was drawn towards the three folded fingers of the right hand of his guru which signified his three unfulfilled desires, one of which was to write an authoritative commentary on the Brahma Sutras. Ramanuja wrote his magnum opus, the Sri-bhashya, in response to his guru's command.

Sankara's theory of Brahmn and Mayavada circumscribed his Advaita position, perceiving the world as essentially nirguna, without attributes, but

which manifests itself with personal attributes, saguna – nirguna being ultimately true and saguna, false.

Sankara explained the Brahmn-world relation in the snake and rope analogy where the illusion is caused by mis-

taking rope for snake. Ramanuja contended that saguna and nirguna are intertwined, as in a body-soul analogy, which makes the saguna projection of the Absolute equally valid and true.

Not only were Sankara and Ramanuja seminal thinkers, they were also bhaktas, wherein lay their mass appeal. Sankara's devotional outpourings, like the Bhaja Govindam and Saundaryalahiri, were meant to inspire and connect people to their innate divine Self while Ramanuja sought to simplify the Absolute in human endearing terms, where each could visualise cosmic energy in human form, as a friend, mother, disciple and soulmate.

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Sankara's Advaita

The one who discriminates between real and unreal, whose mind is turned away from the unreal, who possesses calmness and allied virtues, and who is longing for liberation, is alone considered qualified to enquire after Brahmn.

Vivekachudamani



The soul appears to be finite because of ignorance. When ignorance is destroyed the Self which does not admit of any multiplicity truly reveals itself by itself: like the sun when the clouds pass away.

Atma Bodha



The mother of the universe who is Shiva and Shakti./ In the narrow part of the middle of your body./ The learned men seem to see a line,/ Which is in the shape of a small wave of the river Yamuna./ And which shines and glitters, and appears like the sky./ Made very thin by thine dense colliding breasts./

Entering your cave-like navel.

Soundarya Lahari

Brahmn, With And Without Form

Ashok Vohra

The knower of Brahmn attains the highest, according to the Taittiriya Upanishad. The question arises: Which Brahmn or Supreme Consciousness is being referred to, the one that is saguna (with form) or nirguna (formless)? Which one should one contemplate on and what is the relationship between the two – are they different? Sages have attempted to answer these questions since long.

Advaita Vedanta says Brahmn is ultimate reality, the Supreme Self. It is the only reality; everything else is its modification. It is the locus of everything and acme of all qualities. It neither changes nor ceases to exist. Brahmn is sat, chit and ananda – pure consciousness, pure bliss and pure existence.

Sankaracharya advocates that Brahmn is essentially nirguna – without attributes and perceptible qualities like size, colour, smell and feel. It is the substratum of every affirmation and denial of qualities. It has no duality in it. It defies description in language because none of its descriptions can be complete and exhaustive.

Though reality depends for its existence on Brahmn, the world is not created by Brahmn. For if it were so, then firstly it becomes a subject of transformation and change. Secondly, the very act of creation puts a limitation on it and it ceases to be infinite. Thirdly, it leads to the unanswerable question, why should it create at all? What is its purpose? In all our attempts to fit Brahmn into categories of our thought, we miss its essential nature. The only way one can describe Brahmn is by using the epithets neti, neti – 'not this, not this' – for it is direct experience. It is self-revealed.

S Radhakrishnan describes Sankara's notion of Brahmn as "bloodless, absolute

darkness with the excess of light".

Ramanujacharya, on the other hand, pleads for a saguna Brahmn that is with attributes and perceptible qualities. It is like a personal god, the saviour of humankind. Saguna Brahmn can be described in language in terms of the infinite, noble and blessed qualities that it possesses.

While Brahmn in Sankaracharya's philosophy is formless, indescribable abstraction, to Ramanuja it is reality. It has form. It can be imagined in its infinite names and forms, though it is not exhausted by any or all of them. It transcends all name and form given to it by its devotees.

Tapovana Maharaja, Swami Chinmayananda's teacher, failed to convince his disciple that both notions are significant to the understanding of Brahmn. However, he resolved the dilemma of saguna and nirguna Brahmn by following what is called 'the Zen-like display of temper'.

Tapovana Maharaja asked Chinmayananda after a prolonged debate on the issue, "Let us have a small break. Could you please fetch me some water?" Chinmayananda dutifully brought a glass of water and

respectfully handed it over to his guru. At this the guru lost his temper; he went wild with rage. He shouted at his disciple. "I had asked you for *water*; why have you given me a *glass*." The dumbstruck Chinmayananda, not being used to such display of anger by his guru, stood there confused, muttering: 'glass...water...water...glass'.

The moral of the story would be apparent for the one who has debated the relationship between saguna and nirguna Brahmn. It shows that the two are aspects of the same reality. They do not contradict one another; rather, they complement one another. They enhance our understanding of the nature of Brahmn, the Supreme Consciousness.

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THE SPEAKING TREE

SACRED SPACE

Gold As Metaphor

As gold is tested in four ways by rubbing, cutting, heating and beating – so a man should be tested by these four things: his renunciation, his conduct, his qualities and his actions.

Chanakya



The scholar does not consider gold and jade to be precious treasures, but loyalty and good faith.

Confucius



The desire of gold is not for gold. It is for the means of freedom and benefit.

Ralph W Emerson



Fire is the test of gold; adversity, of strong men.

Martha Graham



The true happiness that man has searched for since the dawn of humanity – that is the inner gold – awaits any person who holds compassionately the key of anonymous generosity. Do something for your fellow beings, not for the gold, but for the love of life, and you shall truly have the gold.

Anonymous

Putting Things In Perspective

Henryk Skolimowski

Things are not what they are by themselves. Things are so in human context. Something could be ordinary or even vulgar – alternatively, full of grace and even divine – within specific contexts. That's the power of context. When we strive to create peace and grace in our lives, we need to create appropriate contexts. For that, we need to use the right vehicles, which precisely lead to grace and divinity on earth. Among these vehicles are loving kindness, reverence and altruism.

Love is of paramount importance, but equally important is loving kindness, small steps of love suffused with compassion. Loving kindness has many manifestations and most important is to be present for others and accepting others as they are.

Loving kindness is a light, which is gently glowing – not bursting with effervescent fireworks, but just glowing. It extends to saying “good morning” to an unknown old lady who is worn out and staggering; to lending steadfast support to a friend in need.

Loving kindness is universal compassion. It makes other people feel good, while making you glow within. We can elevate simple things to the level of grace and even divinity – by the way we act – by infusing our actions with beauty, loving kindness, reverence and altruism. Why wait for heaven to bestow grace; why not create it ourselves?

As human beings, we are full of potential – both to do good and bad. And since everything in the universe is connected, any act of kindness or cruelty is certain to reverberate all around. We live in a reverential universe that encourages us to be sharing, participatory, gentle and reverential, so let's do that.

Some say that the universe is ordinary

and perhaps even dismal. But there is nothing ordinary in the universe. There is nothing that is ordinary. Every simple thing is a miracle of creation. Every simple thing...

The cosmos we live in is absolutely fabulous. There is nothing ordinary about it: from the moment of its creation to the moment of your birth, to the moment you first fell in love – life is a continuous sequence of mysteries and miracles. When you finally understand it all in depth, you naturally begin to treat the universe with respect; nay with a deep reverence, simply because you understand now what a treasure the universe is. And yes, you also understand that you are a custodian responsible for its well-being.

The world is a sanctuary – it's not a machine, it's a throbbing, living organism. This is the only conception of the universe with which you are completely at ease within yourself. This also means that you are yourself a sanctuary. Not only you; every human being is a sanctuary. In the world which is a sanctuary it is quite natural and, in fact, inevitable that you would treat everybody with reverence. And hence it is quite natural

that you would act with loving kindness to other beings. This is simply an outgrowth of your reverence for life and an extension of your conception that the world is a sanctuary.

Connect the dots – sanctuary-reverence-loving kindness. You do not have to apologise for the interconnectedness nor attempt to justify it. It is the natural response of a person who understands the universe right. In this kind of universe, loving kindness, sharing, reverence, and the idea that you live in a sanctuary, flourish quite naturally; and conversely, these ideas contribute to building such a universe.

Follow Henryk Skolimowski on our website, www.speakingtree.in



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SACRED SPACE

Healing Touch

Sandalwood perfumes even the axe that hews it down. The more we rub sandalwood against a stone the more its fragrance spreads. Burn it, and it wafts its glory in the entire neighbourhood. So is the enchanting beauty of forgiveness in life.

Swami Chinmayananda



Where there is injury let me sow pardon.

Francis of Assisi



When you hold resentment towards another, you are bound to that person or condition by an emotional link that is stronger than steel.

Forgiveness is the only way to dissolve that link and get free.

Catherine Ponder



God began by forgiving us. And he invites us all to forgive each other.

Lewis B Smedes



Most of us can forgive and forget; we just don't want the other person to forget that we forgave.

Ivern Ball

Mind, Involution & Evolution

Georges van Vrekhem

How did life appear in matter? How does an organism consisting only of matter produce consciousness? The mind-body problem remains vividly discussed though unexplained, and the present gross materialistic stance of neurobiology, that all is matter and that consequently life and consciousness are (epi)phenomena of matter, raises more questions than it answers...

The universal scheme behind terrestrial evolution may, in Sri Aurobindo's view, be outlined as follows. There is the silent Brahmn, the Ineffable, which can only be known by the highest spiritual experience. One and the same is the active Brahmn which manifests its inexhaustible infinity in endless time and timelessness. Manifestation has been and will be always at the top of gradations of eternal manifestation in the worlds of the three ultimate attributes of the One: sat – existence, chit – consciousness, ananda – bliss. The fourth domain of this upper hemisphere has been called 'Super mind' by Sri Aurobindo. It is the manifesting consciousness of the One, truth-consciousness, absolute knowledge that is absolute truth and power.

This Super mind is not something like the human mind at its highest potential. It is a supra-mind from which our human mind derives, but which is as different from it as the sunlight is from the ray of a distant star. It is what some scientists have intuited behind the complexities of nature, what is present in nature and supports it everywhere. It is the real 'mind of God'. In fact, it is what is called 'God' in the purest sense.

From the domains of the Super mind descend the worlds of the lower hemisphere,

those with which we are more familiar: mind, life, matter. Seen as such, the One has projected itself into its contrary, which means that below matter – already an astonishing degree of organisation (as modern science has found out) – there are still deeper, darker levels, those of the subconscious and of the inconscient foundation. Nevertheless, all is and remains the One in every differentiation: 'Matter too is Brahmn', and so are life and mind...

Ours is not a typical but an evolutionary world. As all possibilities exist in the One, there was, and always is, also the possibility of taking on the appearance of its contrary: infinite oneness becomes infinite fragmentation; light becomes darkness, truth falsehood bliss suffering, eternal existence death...

There is, on the other hand, the full awareness of the apparent insignificance of planet Earth in the universe...

That matter is energy had become a supposedly platitude till the atomic bombs showed what the equation could actually mean. To the acceptance and understanding of the equation matter=energy=consciousness, the mind of humanity has not yet arrived, although it

is one of its oldest occult truths...

If material energy is that powerful, what may be the power of consciousness which it contains? Powerful enough to create galaxies, black holes and multiple universes, and to perform wonders of the subatomic world which can be represented schematically, but which surpass the imagination.

All the (typal) worlds are on the Earth, and to imagine a clean cut or irreconcilable difference between them is ignorance: 'here and not elsewhere, not by going to some other world, the divine realisation must come'. But this is another matter. From Evolution, Religion and the Unknown God.



THE
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SACRED SPACE

*Tomorrow is Rama
Navami*

Queen Kausalya gave birth to a son with divine attributes like lotus eyes, lengthy arms, roseate lips, voice like drumbeat, adored by all, and who is the greatly blessed epitome of Vishnu, namely Rama.

*Valmiki Ramayana,
Bala Kanda*



Rama means that which revels in every one of us, the pure light of consciousness, the Atman, the Self, the Atma-Rama.
Swami Chinmayananda



Chant, O mind, the name of Rama, / knowing full well its meaning through deep contemplation...

Meditating deep within, let me become merged with You. / In the cavern of my heart, let me know the place You dwell; / meditating deeply let me be at one with you... /

Then I'll know Your mystery, instantly and certainly... / That same moment, ego-illusion will go - who knows where? / Meditating deep inside, let me be at one with you..."

Sri Thyagaraja

Change Your Life, Change The World

Ryuhō Okawa

Those who really understand themselves, warts and all, are very difficult to trap. Conversely, it is easy to trick and bring down those who have no knowledge of their limitations. All that is required is to lay a trap in their path and they will fall right into it. This often happens to people who believe they possess infinite ability. So look at your strengths and weaknesses, as well as those of people around you. When you arrive at an obstacle, simply think of it as a matter of controlling your desires. Moderation is the key.

Controlling your desires and being content with moderate and gradual progress means you will rarely experience major failure. Excessive desire is referred to as "attachment", and it is only by getting rid of attachments that ultimate happiness can be achieved. This is a path to happiness that is open to everyone.

In many cases people are happier if they never achieve what they desire. For example, many elected officials aspire to lead their countries one day, but for most, it will turn out better for them if this never happens. Once a person has achieved the highest office, that politician is beset with comments about what he does and doesn't do; the leader is criticised for trifling matters and wonders why this should be... Imagine not being able to walk out of your house unless you are surrounded on all sides by guards. In the end, what is seen as an unparalleled honour can lead to the greatest happiness.

The same can be said of everyone's desires. For example, people who are successful in their careers will probably have difficulty

being the best husbands or wives. Some people feel unhappy because their children do not appear to be very bright, while other parents whose children are brilliant lose the ability to converse with them, leading to inadequacy and sadness.

We face limitations, but we have none. The causes of our limitations are found within us, but their boundaries are often set by other people's objective opinions. If you feel you are unable to get ahead in life, despite all your efforts up to now, you may need to look at yourself more objectively.

You may decide not to aim for material success. You could be content to work at a job that

is not overly demanding but pleases you. If you are satisfied with such employment, you could go on to find meaning in life through other areas, such as religious activities. Should you decide, however, that you want to move forward and perhaps own a large business some day, you will not be satisfied with your present routine job. It is entirely up to you to choose the sort of life you will lead, but if you continue to feel that

despite all your efforts you cannot move on to the next stage in life, it could be that you are not being realistic about elements of your own nature. This is when it is important to see yourself the way others see you...

When you realise and fully accept that life is eternal, you have received the greatest treasure imaginable. Hardship or distress you encounter in life represents growth for your soul, and even if you struggle to solve a problem, you will be able to make it a great experience. You will awaken to the true purpose and meaning of life, and this knowledge will help you in the growth of your soul. Courtesy: Jaico.



**THE
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The Householder And Evolution

Moni Mohan Bhattacharyya

Most of us eke out a livelihood, raise families, do odd duties and finally leave the world disillusioned. In so doing we hardly realise how we are distancing ourselves from the eternal message hidden in the very web of life. Now the question arises whether household duties can help us evolve.

Our ancients worked out four stages for human life out of which the Grihastha dharma or householder's life played the pivotal role. Household duties were spiritually so intertwined that human life could fulfill its divine purpose and society was constantly enriched with inputs from persons of great wisdom. If it is so rewarding, then why do we shun this soul-purifying dharma? Perhaps, a sense of opportunism gradually creeps into our domestic lives to eclipse the glorious past.

Though we belong to similar family units, we have become thoroughly self-centred today because of a blind imitation of western society. The elderly, for instance were taken care of by extended support systems available within the family. Today, however, we are no longer shy of admitting that we need old age homes in our society. A tale from the Mahabharat may be an eye opener.

Once, a mendicant Brahmin was studying the Vedas under a tree. Suddenly, a bird from the top of the tree soiled his head. When the Brahmin looked up at the bird in extreme anger, the bird was instantly burnt to death. This fact instilled a sense of ego in his mind.

Soon thereafter, while he approached a house for alms, the lady of the house kept him waiting. Apologising for the delay, she told him that she was attending to her work-fatigued husband as she considered this her

first priority. This enraged the Brahmin. At this point, the lady reminded him not to be swayed much by the 'burning of the bird' incident. The Brahmin was surprised. How did she know? She answered politely that she acquired this power out of dedicated service to her husband's family and then advised him to meet her Guru, Dharmabyadh.

Dharmabyadh not only welcomed the Brahmin at his meat shop but accompanied him also to his house as he already knew his purpose through his divine power. The meat seller apprised him that he never killed any animal himself and only sold the meat. Pointing to his aged parents, he humbly mentioned that he had high regard for them and took good care of them. He clarified further that he never used unsavoury words, ignored them or hurt them and his only priority in life was to serve his parents without neglecting other duties.

To build a family with a human face, we need to practise sacrifice with humility. This divine quality gradually helps us to invite positivity which changes our selfish attitude altogether and helps us serve the family with greater commitment. As sacrifice begets detachment, Grihastha sanyas is to follow thereafter.

The characters described above did attain enlightenment because of their attitude. They were honest. They elevated family duties to the height of daily worship and then transcended ego to achieve liberation. Thus, every home can be a potential spiritual hub provided we set a 'Lakshman Rekha' for materialism and start practising every duty with utmost honesty. If we do that, where is the need to go to any designated place of worship? Also, this being a practice-oriented 'sadhana', it can never go waste; it leads us to the Divine, eventually.



THE SPEAKING TREE

How Durga Became So Strong

Arup Mitra

Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely – this is a popular saying which has a strong element of truth in it. In every sphere we come across powerful and corrupt people who, to serve their own interests, stoop to any extent. They could threaten a vulnerable, honest person to implicate him in a case of corruption. Often, even if the actual culprit happens to get caught, the umbrella of power is there to provide protection. Power begets power. The most dangerous are those who are powerful and corrupt as well as intelligent. Intellect is a double-edged sword – it can cut either way. It could even justify a wrong-doing. Articulation and skilful presentation could make untruth appear like truth.

That is why Ramakrishna did not give much importance to a learned person; he respected realised souls. A pundit might be capable of engaging in any discussion relentlessly. However, from the spiritual point of view, this is of no consequence. A realised soul talks less, but in his deliberation there is strength because it is not based on what he has memorised or the information he has gathered. When Herman Hesse in his work describes Gautama, the Illustrious One, this aspect comes out sharply.

Since there will always be powerful and corrupt persons in life, the crucial question is, how should we handle them? Two paths are before us. One is to unite yourself with others as per the old saying 'united we stand divided we fall'. It will be possible to find like-minded people who have respect for truth and ethical values. It is not as though society is full of corrupt people; they are fewer in number but they seem to dominate because of the strong

nexus they have with the powerful. If only the honest ones keep their ego under check and come together to overthrow the corrupt, the problem of corruption can be overcome.

Here is an example from the Durga Saptasati. As long as devtas fought Mahisasura individually, none could defeat him. The moment they came out of their individual ego and decided to act together, the result was tremendous – it led to the arising of the eternal Goddess Durga. Each devta empowered her with the strength that they had individually. That collective force rose up to meet the challenge posed by negativity. The message is clear: evil cannot be destroyed completely, but it can be kept under control.

It's important not to remain indifferent when faced with corruption but to speak out and do what one can to make a difference.

Several temptations will come your way that could distract you from the task at hand. These offers are likely to be substantial in terms of the material. However, the need is to cultivate equipoise and not surrender to temptation.

Not even a few of us might have the resilience and strength of a Gandhi or have the will to follow in the footsteps of a Christ. But one can try, and perhaps make a difference, however small, so that eventually, taken in the collective, there comes a time when the force of honesty and goodness gathers sufficient momentum to root out corruption wherever possible.

Every one of us can contribute a bit of ourselves to strengthen the efforts of the more forthcoming among us – and who knows, just as the devtas put in their mite to raise the eternal Durga, we too could find ourselves raising a strong force that will help cleanse the system.

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THE
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All This Has Happened Before

Rock Furtado

In an interesting conversation with a spiritually evolved friend, the sharing revolved around the purpose of life on this planet – where is it coming from and where is it going? Of the many thoughts shared, the one that struck a chord was the story of a new-age guru who saw his own death scene being played out – he knew the date, time and place of his own death. Was this an out-of-body experience? How does this work?

We are born of our parents and our parents are born of their parents and so it continued over generations in time. Extending this further, it could be assumed that future generations will come forth from us, and so the chain of physical human experience will likely continue, all other things being equal. However, in this model, the future generation is already in existence somewhere in the cosmos and the chain would ensure that the existing generation perishes in order for the next to take over physical body and space.

Here's one explanation: The cosmos has a major influence on all life on earth. Since the influence of the sun and stars that make up the cosmos take a certain time to reach the earth, it can safely be assumed that by the time the next set of rays and other influences of the cosmos reach earth – the in-between period is history and is already concluded or in motion.

The story of the earth of our generation and many more generations after us – keeping the cosmos time in view – as Mahavira says, is as follows: "Whatever is happening has already happened". Visiting the death scene of a physical body of any particular lifetime does appear to be a possibility. This

concept takes a little time to understand but seems quite plausible.

Many renowned authors of metaphysical works have hinted at this possibility. Similarly, several Zen masters allude to this possibility. There appears to be a significant number of people who can help others to walk through this experience. Research on Past Life Regression and Future Life Progression work is therefore gaining in popularity as a way to possibly get a firsthand view of this intriguing phenomenon.

Did Abraham Lincoln see his own death? There is a story about Lincoln. In a dream he reportedly saw that he was murdered and his

lifeless body was kept in a particular room in the White House and surrounded by mourners whom he readily recognised. He woke up disturbed and narrated the contents of his dream to his wife. They both had a good laugh and went back to sleep.

Three days later, Abraham Lincoln was murdered and his body was in the very same room he'd described to his wife – from his dream – with even the sequence of mourners

matching what he saw in his dream.

Is it good to know the future? Will progression to the death scene make us better human beings? Would we see the futility of living a life created by greed, control and fear? Will the fact that "from nothing to nothing" is how physical life ends, enable us to experience a new realisation to live a balanced life on earth? Would human suffering at the hands of other human beings be a thing of the past? I wonder...

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**THE
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Young Agents Of Positive Change

A Baha'i Perspective

The period of youth is pivotal for human development. A critical period of personal change, this is when you begin to consciously explore and apply your knowledge, values and beliefs about individual and collective life. You take on new responsibilities, becoming agents of change in your communities. Young, you are not victims in need of others to solve your problems. Rather, your age group represents a tremendous source of intellectual and social potential waiting to be developed and channelled towards socially constructive ends.

The future will depend a great deal on the manner in which educational programmes and methods are designed to release your latent potential, preparing you for the world you are to inherit. The connection between education and individual and collective well-being is well established and it is imperative to focus on a particular dimension of education, namely education in service of community, which, in our experience, is central to the transformation of individual and community life.

Forces that influence the intellectual and emotional development of a child are not confined to the classroom. Media, technology, family, peers, the wider community and other social institutions convey messages that may be reinforcing in some respects and contradictory in others, which could add to your confusion – about identity, moral purpose and social reality. As such, formal education needs to go beyond the exclusive aim of helping you to secure gainful employment. Educational processes need to assist you to recognise and express your potential while developing in you the capacity to contribute to the spiritual and material prosperity of communities.

The concept of a twofold moral purpose – to develop your inherent potential and to contribute to a transformation of society – provides an important axis of the educational process. Many educational programmes perceive young people as mere receptacles of information. To challenge these trends, the Baha'i community endeavours to develop a culture which promotes an independent way of thinking, studying and acting, in which students see themselves as united by a desire to work for common good, supporting one another and advancing together, respectful of each one's knowledge.

Knowledge is the key if you wish to flourish. Access to knowledge is the right of every human being. The responsibility to generate new knowledge and apply it in socially beneficial ways rests on your shoulders. In the same way, the creation of an environment conducive to this process is a duty of every government. Without access to knowledge, your meaningful participation in community affairs is not possible. The primary focus of educational processes, then, must be to build capacity in young people like you to participate fully as protagonists of social progress.

Inequities of girls' access to quality education must be addressed for this would have a 'multiplier effect' – it results in reduced chances of early marriage, greater likelihood of their informed and active role in family planning, reduced infant and maternal mortality, enhanced participation in social, economic and political decision-making and promotion of economic prosperity. The equality of men and women, boys and girls is a fundamental truth about human reality and not just a desirable condition to be achieved for the good of society.

Contributed by the Baha'i Office of Public Affairs, India, on the occasion of Naw Ruz, the Baha'i New Year. Contact dea@ibnc.in



THE SPEAKING TREE

Managing Your Relationships

Satsang: Sadhguru

Much of the anxiety i experience comes through my relationships. Isn't it reasonable to expect some understanding from other people?

When you live in this world, there are various complex interactions happening. As your field-of-play increases, complexity of interaction also increases. If you are just sitting in a cubicle, working on your computer with only one other person, you need only a little understanding; but if you are managing a thousand people, you need good understanding of everybody – you won't be able to manage if you want all these people to understand you. You need to understand the limitations and capabilities of these thousand people and do what you can; only then will you have the power to move the situation the way you want it to go. If you are waiting for these thousand people to understand you and act, it is a pipe dream; it won't happen.

Somebody becomes closer and dearer to you only as you understand them better. If they understand you, they enjoy the closeness of the relationship. If you understand them better, then you enjoy the closeness. If you are expecting the other to comply with you all the time while you don't understand the limitations, possibilities, needs and capabilities of that person, then conflict happens; it is a given. Unfortunately, the closest relationships have more conflict going on than between enemies.

In your relationships, you have fought many more battles than this and are still fighting, isn't it so? This is because your line of understanding and theirs is different. If you cross this Line of Control, they get mad. If they cross it, you get mad. If you move your under-

standing beyond theirs, their understanding also becomes a part of yours. You'll be able to embrace their limitations and capabilities. In everyone, there are positive and negative aspects. If you embrace all this in your understanding, you can make the relationship the way you want it. If you leave it to their understanding, it will become accidental. If they are magnanimous, things will happen well for you; if not, the relationship will break up.

Do you want to be the one who decides what happens to your life? Whether they are intimate relationships, professional, political, global or whatever, don't you want to be the person who decides what happens in your life? If you

do, include everything and everybody into your understanding. Enhance your understanding to a point that you can look beyond people's madness also. There are wonderful people around you, but once in a while they like to go crazy for a few minutes. If you don't understand that, you will lose them. If you do, then you know how to handle them. Life is not always linear; you have to do many things to keep it going. If you forsake your under-

standing, your capability will be lost. Whether it is a question of personal relationships or professional management, you need understanding; otherwise, you will not have fruitful relationships.

The way you are right now, the very quality of your life is decided by the type of relationships you hold. Make the effort to understand people around you.

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Inner Engineering, Mar 28-Apr 3; free intro: Mar 28, 6 pm-7:30 pm at Kavuri Hills Yoga and Meditation Centre, Madhapur. Call: 9948875588/040-64583753; email: hyderabad@ishafoundation.org; visit: ishafoundation.org



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Master Blaster's Sadhana

Rudroneel Ghosh

It is a feat that no mortal will ever match. That's how cricket lovers across the globe describe master blaster Sachin Tendulkar's 100th international century, an eye-popping achievement by any stretch of imagination. For more than a year, Sachin's anticipated 'century of centuries' has dominated the mind-scape of cricket like no other event has in cricketing history. The source of wild media speculation, it has been the subject of intense debate among cricket pundits. But the great man himself never spoke about it, choosing instead to play each ball on its merit. And finally, when he did break his silence, it was to express a sense of relief at having met the expectations of more than a billion fans.

But milestones – and there have been many in Sachin's career spanning 22 years – can hardly define the little maestro and what he means to the game. For two decades Sachin embodied the collective hopes and aspirations of an entire people. His rise in the cricketing world has paralleled the emergence of a confident India. As mascot of our pride, he's been inspiring countless to dream big and reach for the stars. Each of his innings has confirmed the belief that anything is possible if one is determined and willing to work hard. He is the poster boy of dedication, having devoted life and soul to his craft. What have mere statistics got to do with any of these sublime qualities?

For the truth is, greatness cannot be measured in numbers. Numbers cannot quantify the dreams of a child who imagines himself as Sachin carting the lights of Glenn McGrath, Waqar Younis and Shane Warne all across the stadium in a World Cup match. Numbers cannot capture the prayers of millions of fans who, regardless of their persuasion, nationality or

occupation, hold their collective breath in nervous anticipation as Sachin strides onto a cricket field. Numbers do not tell the story of blood and sweat that went into the making of a beautiful cricketing mind.

Sachin's former coach Ramakant Achrekar – who had a profound influence on him during his formative years – often tells budding cricketers how he would place a one rupee coin on top of the stumps while his protege would bat. If Sachin lasted the entire training session without being dismissed, he would get the coin. Years later, having seen his name etched into cricketing hall of fame and made fortunes beyond most people's wildest dreams, Sachin continues to treasure 13 of those 'Achrekar coins' as among his most prized possessions. Humility has been the hallmark of Sachin's career, which has allowed him to continuously set new benchmarks not only for his colleagues but also peers in other sports.

Having shouldered the expectations of his followers for over two decades, many wonder about the secret to Sachin's longevity on the field. Players have come and gone but like a sturdy oak tree, Sachin has been a constant. Speculation about his retirement is evergreen; but Sachin has never let that affect his game. For him, the game is a spiritual exercise, pure sadhana unadulterated by worldly distractions. Sachin is beyond records; his quest is only for perfection.

True, he still cares about winning and bringing joy and laurels to his team and country. But that is a natural consequence of his sadhana. The number of centuries he has scored is only trivia for fans. For Sachin Tendulkar became a legend long before he scored his 100th century and he will remain so long after he has put down his bat.

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Living Prayerfully Is The Best Way

Discourse: Morari Bapu

We have a tendency to think of worship as one part of our life, as a part of our day, and so we set aside a certain time for prayer. We often deem spiritual life as being separate from daily life. And we might also think that the only way to communicate with and reach God is through prayer.

However, life itself can be worship. We can live in this world and perform actions with our thoughts anchored in God, rather than thinking of worship as something that must be done in the morning or before we sleep at night.

Do not neglect responsibility and worldly duties for the sake of prayer. Carrying out our day-to-day work is as important as taking the name of God. If God is in our consciousness, knowingly or unknowingly, then worship becomes a part of us, and our actions become a form of worship. By dedicating all that we do to the Supreme, all our actions become the work of God. In this way, the importance of our work, of what has become God's work with sheer dedication, is tantamount to the name of God, to prayer.

Hanuman did not perform puja; he devoted himself to service of God, of Rama, making himself a humble servant of God and society. For those who carry out their work with a sense of duty, honesty and energy, sleep is samadhi, soul is Brahmn, body a temple and speech is as good as stotra.

If work and taking the name of God are of equal importance, why then should spiritual life be separate from routine life? Rather, daily activities should be converted into sadhana. Because *jivan hi sadhana hai* – life is itself worship.

Many make a temple in their homes – they designate a special place where they sit and pray or perform rituals in front of deities. This is good, of course. However, why not extend the concept and make the entire home a temple? By taking each person that lives with us to be God, loving and treating one another with compassion, God will be living in our home.

Furthermore, when immersed in prayer, when chanting, let us not ignore family; let us not ignore the requests of our children. Yes, it is good to drown in the name of God – *naam mein doobo* – but let us remember there are no conditions or rules to *naam sankirtan* or taking God's name.

We must simultaneously give respect to those around us. If your children want to be taken somewhere, then take them for an outing; take them to the cinema, even if it might be in the midst of your prayers. And there is nothing wrong in watching films, those that expose us to good culture and values.

By feeling the presence of God in whatever we do, by remembering Him, we will eliminate the ego; we will not take credit for whatsoever is good, nor will we blame God or fate for that which goes wrong. Our work will then have the impact of divine energy.

Just as hair and nails, separated from the body, become waste, Bapu explains that worship that is separate from and does not conform to ordinary life is also a waste. There is therefore no need to forsake worldly things, to forsake our duties in order to worship the Lord. Instead, let us surrender our actions, our thoughts and our possessions to Him, such that our entire life is a form of prayer.



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Let Those Who Have Ears Listen

Marguerite Theophil

A lost sheep, a mustard seed, a woman searching determinedly for her lost coin, an errant son and a barren fig tree, have all conveyed timeless and extraordinary truths.

In choosing to teach through parables, Jesus was using a common, popular device most other Jewish rabbis had, over the years; yet the parables of Jesus, with examples drawn from ordinary, everyday life in ancient Palestine, are the ones we are most familiar with.

A total of 33 parables are recorded in the books of the Gospel, and their impact – and enduring effectiveness – lies in making deeper theological truths accessible to all people. In each parable, there is the literal meaning, beyond which lies a deeper, beneath-the-surface message about living God's teachings.

The English word 'parable', from the Greek word 'parabole', literally means 'to place alongside'. So a parable, at its most basic, compares one thing to another. For example, one parable describes the simple transformation of dough into bread by the inclusion of yeast. We learn that we are transformed when we allow God's word to take root in our hearts, and in turn, are called to be 'leaven' that transforms the society in which we live and work.

Why should a shepherd go through a lot of trouble, even risking his life to find one lost sheep when 99 are safe in his care? The shepherd's concern for one lost sheep and his willingness to risk his own life for it conveys to listeners a lot about God's concern for each of his children.

As a translation of the Hebrew word 'mashal', the word parable may also refer to a riddle. So, while many of Jesus's parables start out grounded in the commonplace, they

contain a twist which would, in many ways, contradict or question assumptions and beliefs his listeners had held for years.

Take, for example, the Parable of the Good Samaritan. A Samaritan man, who would be a person from a group that orthodox Jews of the time despised and considered as being unworthy of God, ends up as the selfless, compassionate hero in a story. Wealthy kings, whose normal concerns are with their own wealth and power, end up cancelling huge debts owed to them by mere servants.

"The marrow of a parable," Jerome, an early church father, declared, "is different from the promise of its surface, and like as gold is sought for in the earth, the kernel in a nut and hidden fruit in the prickly covering of chestnuts, so, too, in parables we must search more deeply for divine meaning."

Perhaps the best advice to help us learn from parables today comes from Sally McFague, a theology professor, who suggests that the first thing to do with a parable is to read it several times, letting the story penetrate us, rather than looking around for possible interpretations of it.

Sometimes Jesus ends a parable with the words: 'Let those who have ears listen', and we could receive the message as, 'Here's my story; not all of you may get it, but some of you – do try to understand it'.

Jesus taught in parables so that people would remember them, pass them on, puzzle over them, perhaps discuss them, and try to figure out what they really meant. Helping us break habitual patterns, stereotypes or biases, the purpose of Jesus's parables is to bring about a change of mind and heart in those who care to truly listen.

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The Only Way Out Is Within

Rohini Singh

Do you feel well? If you're feeling joyful, content, grateful, alert and expansive, your system is faring well. If you're not quite so comfortable, you're up against energy thieves that are enjoying a "feast" at your expense. You know that solution: Plug the leaks – drop resistance, face fear, banish worry or practise forgiveness, as the case may be.

Once you plug the leaks, your energy system immediately begins to recover. As you continue to "detoxify" yourself, your self-awareness increases. You begin to choose your responses and hence shift the whole paradigm you're living in. You assume total responsibility for whatever state you find yourself in and know that only you, and not external circumstances, can resolve any problems that may crop up.

In actuality, this journey is about letting your mind, the small one that you're familiar with, dissolve and expand into the Big Mind, the place of infinite potential. Tapping into it allows you flow, surrender, co-creation – and higher guidance. The heart, remember, guides you to increasing connectivity, joy and love. It replaces pain as a habit. The journey has to be lived, not merely understood...

... You can start on your journey right now by doing some of the following: Every night write 10 things that you're grateful for in a journal kept especially for this purpose. It gets you to focus on what's good in your life, not on what isn't. And it's a proven energy rule. What you focus on expands. This is the easiest way of attracting more of what makes you happy and being open to receive.

Meditation provides the break that your mind needs and deserves and helps you cope with stressful lifestyles...When you

meditate, brain-wave activity slows down and depending on the depth of your meditation, you can access more profound levels of creativity, healing, relaxation and de-stressing. This is the time when the small mind plugs into the Big Mind, gets recharged, and accesses an area of infinite potentiality.

'Breathe': Make a small placard that displays this one word. Put it on your office desk or at home where you can see it frequently. Every time you do, just take two deep breaths with awareness and continue with your regular activities. This is an incredible awareness exercise. It helps you create the space you need to make conscious choices.

Cut cords: This is a magical practice. When we interact with people, we're automatically connected with them by a cord at the solar plexus, the area just below the rib cage. We "exchange" energies through this cord – which is strong in the case of people we're close to. To keep your energy system clear, you must disconnect and terminate this exchange each day with every person you interact with. It's an excellent practice if you've had an unpleasant conversation with someone. This is what you do: Close your eyes. Visualise the cord. Imagine yourself cutting it. Mentally say: i cut and release all connections with you at the solar plexus level. Reconnect the cord at the heart level. Say the words: Only love remains between us.

Steal joy: This is an amazing practice that you can use to "trick" yourself into changing your mood or state when you're feeling miserable. First, accept that this is so and allow it to be. Don't fight it. Converse with yourself; take a break from your misery, for just a day...

Injecting these little exercises in awareness into your daily life will make you feel in charge, starting immediately.



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Injecting these little exercises in awareness into your daily life will make you feel in charge, starting immediately.

The Language Of Faith

Krishna Kops

The Bible, Quran, Vedas, and all the other holy books are enshrined by many of us in the innermost part of our heart and beliefs. There are those who would even kill 'heathens', if they dare to blaspheme their divine scriptures.

But why would you kill for "the word of God", when these words never did and never will represent the truth of God? Language is subjective and a necessary withdrawal from reality, since the finite human needs to simplify the complexity of being in order to convey what he perceives.

Firstly, even if words might denote a putative entity, such as the word right, words as well as entities are not stable, neither in their essence, nor in their connotations, which we ascribe to them. Besides the fact that right has several meanings, some might connect right to positive feelings, while others associate it in a subliminal way with, say, fascism or conservatism.

Left, on the other hand, derives from the word winstar and had always negative connotations, such as weak or foolish (see also gauche and sinister). So we can understand words diversely and even attribute very personal thoughts and feelings to them.

Scholars such as Norman Fairclough and Noam Chomsky opine that language undergoes a perpetual struggle for power, whereby the ruling class attempts to control language and to define words after their needs.

Secondly, language is not only dependent on coding, but also on decoding, which might be different depending on individual and society. Otherwise Luther would not have translated a different version of the Bible and scholars would not debate over whether the Quran urges one to kill "infidels" or not.

But how can this be if, for example, it is written in the Bible that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1) or "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17)?

Very simple: the word *word* here does not refer to the linguistic word as we know it. Many scholars believe *word* derives in this instance from the translation of the old Greek word *logos*. *Logos* has several meanings, such as reason.

Stoic philosophers thought of *logos* as a godly, omnipresent and animating principle. It is no coincidence that this definition does not seem to be incompatible with the Hinduistic concept of Self.

Some scholars argue that *word* stands in this case for Jesus. Therefore, Jesus becomes the personification of reason, the divine principle. In the same way Sufis saw Muhammad as the personification of *logos*, and argued that there could be no connection to God without this requisite link. Maybe it did not happen by chance that neither Jesus, Muhammad nor Buddha ever pinned any word down. Besides the accusations of illiteracy, it might have been due to their knowledge that words could never convey the entire truth of God and that words transfix on paper easily become dogmas.

Or perhaps it was just because they never existed and were simply a symbol for the divine *logos*, the Self that is all-encompassing. Thus, if the *word* is all-embracing, we should not kill for it, but cherish its manifold manifestation.

Nevertheless, these best-sellers are certainly not written in vain, because they are a beautiful and wise road sign pointing towards the right direction. Yet, it is still us who have to walk, and it is also us who can get lost on the way.

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The Meaning Of Pilgrimage

Richard Lannoy

Pilgrimages are intentionally difficult journeys of devotion. By making a long journey to these powerful places, pilgrims achieve a degree of personal growth. The act of pilgrimage serves as a bridge between the known realm of earth, nature, society, and the unknown world of divine beings, from the ephemeral and illusory to reality and eternity.

A place of pilgrimage is known as a 'tirtha sthana' - 'which is associated with or inhabited by sages deserving reverence, who are without desire, egoism or delusion and who have been purified by a performance of penance' says the Garuda Purana. A tirtha refers to 'crossing the ford' - to cross is to be transformed. Among the holiest Hindu tirthas are sacred rivers, especially the Ganges. Its entire length is sacred, yet at some points it is believed that its sanctity comes to a focus. One such point is Kashi. A tirtha is directly experienced as an intensification of the sacred or supernatural power in time and space. It is there - to be seen, to be felt, to enter, rather as the hearth is the centre of the home, to which all who enter naturally gravitate. And this, despite the fact that home and tirtha are essentially opposites...

The pilgrim makes a transformative journey to a tirtha in order to see, to have darshan - which means 'seeing': Kashi darshan, Vishwanath darshan, Himalaya darshan. All nature is capable of revealing itself as cosmic sacrality. An integral religious society like India's, searches for identity in the cosmos. The cosmos in its entirety can become a hierophany - a 'divine showing'. The struggle to overcome difficulties of journey opens up to pilgrims deeper realities and resources of their own being and of the surrounding world. Pilgrimage brings together inner and outer worlds, the physical

landscape serving as a mirror for the inner one. The pilgrim is cast from the relatively closed home world onto the vastness of nature... Indian pilgrimages... reflects a belief that there is something close to the essence, to beauty and truth in the landscape through which the seeker journeys. Pilgrimage is metaphysical sightseeing...

Eliade points out, man does not 'choose' these places: they are merely 'discovered' by him. Such tirthas, to which the faithful have made pilgrimage since time immemorial, usually possess palpably 'magical' atmosphere and physical beauty... The sheer size of the subcontinent has traditionally provided little stimulus to venture abroad. But the need of the landlocked to break out, to get up and go, abandon stale routine for a while and be free spirits, has fostered the urge to undertake pilgrimage on an unprecedented scale.

To attract large numbers, the tirtha sthana must both be an accessible crossway and yet distant enough to be reached from afar by an arduous journey - like Mecca, Jerusalem, Delos Compostella, Benaras, located at a territorial midpoint, at the intersection of transcontinental

trade routes... The essence of pilgrimage is movement outwards and away from the home base. Even those who are permanently resident in places of pilgrimage have the same urge to take off on a journey to some distant tirtha.

Pilgrimage is a universal feature in the religious life of man - and even those who profess no religion still feel the urge to make an arduous journey to some distant and elevating goal that transcends the normal parameters of their lives. To benefit from the spiritual and moral qualities of a holy place both pilgrims and secular-intentional seekers must approach their goal in the right frame of mind. Pilgrim's India, Penguin Ananda.



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The Earth

The earth is a garden,
 The Lord its gardener,
 Cherishing all,
 None neglected.

Adi Granth



The Creator created himself...And created all creation in which He is manifest. You are the bumble- bee, flower, fruit and tree. You are water, desert, ocean and pond. You are the big fish, tortoise and Cause of causes. Your form cannot be known.
Sri Guru Granth Sahib 1016



The earth is your mother. Respect for 'mother earth' is the only solution to problems.

Guru Nanak



The earth does not belong to us; we belong to the earth. This we know. All things are connected, like the blood which unites one family. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the children of the earth. We did not weave the web of life; we are merely a strand in it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.

Chief Seattle

Today is EcoSikh
 Environmental
 Consciousness Day.

Learning From Nature

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

English poet Walter de la Mare once observed a lady at the dining table. There were some food items on the table like porridge, muffins and apples. He had a strange thought: outside of her these are food items, but once she eats them, they become part of her – that is, Miss T. Inspired by the thought he added these lines to a poem he was composing: 'It's a very odd thing,/ As odd as can be,/ That whatever Miss T eats/ Turns into Miss T.'

This is the miracle of Miss T's stomach. But one's mind can conceive of something that is a million times stranger than this. All these food items were produced in an external world. But, miraculously, these food items are totally in accordance with our needs. Both are complementary to each other. This complementary link between two quite different things is clear evidence that one Creator made both. It is a highly well-planned creation.

This phenomenon of nature leads us to believe that there is a single force that controls the whole of nature. This in turn leads us to believe that in nature there is unity of purpose – what may be called the oneness of God and the oneness of human beings. This phenomenon of nature gives us the right ideology of life – an ideology which is the basis of universal peace and brotherhood. This dispels the notion of 'we and they', it promotes oneness of thought. It saves us from all kinds of distraction.

This ideology inculcates the notion that nature is not hostile but friendly towards us. And when we discover that nature is of a friendly character, we also have no option but to adopt this friendly culture in our society.

Then the other aspect of this 'Miss T's' experience is that we try to turn all the things around

us to our own advantage. We try to absorb all the things intellectually that have already been physically absorbed by our stomach.

Everyone talks of spirituality. But what is spirituality? Spirituality is not anything mysterious. Spirituality can be arrived at through contemplation rather than through meditation. Spirituality is an intellectual phenomenon. In my experience, the basis of spirituality is mind rather than heart.

Our digestive system is a mechanism that can extract physical energy from material food. Similarly, our mind can extract spiritual energy from the same material items. Externally, these items are foodstuffs but, internally, these items are spiritual.

For example, if you think that God is constantly supplying all those natural bounties to us without asking for its price, this is a silent message to us that we too have to live as givers in our society without expecting that the receivers should give us anything in return. This kind of experience promotes the culture of selflessness, of unilateral ethics, the spirit of living as a problem-free member of society.

We need a model code of ethics, and nature serves as that model. Nature is a divine factory. It produces those items that are highly suitable for us. Strangely enough, this industry works without consulting us. The character of nature is a predictable one. So it is required of us that we live in our society as predictable members of it. Nature works in a predictable manner, thus it gives us this lesson: live as a predictable member of your society.

The highest quality of a human being can be summed up in these two words: predictable character.

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Burn Anger Before Anger Burns You

Talk: J P Vaswani

Hang Up Your Boots

When people started referring to me as "The Wall" I was apprehensive – when I stumbled would they now say 'a brick in the wall falls' or 'wall's foundation turns shaky'?! But I've enjoyed it. However, it's now time to bow out. *Cricketer Rahul Dravid, 'The Wall'*



Work was like cats were supposed to be: if you disliked and feared it and tried to keep out if its way, it knew at once and sought you out and jumped on your lap and climbed all over you to show how much it loved you. Please God, he thought, don't let me die in harness.

Kingsley Amis, Take A Girl Like You, ch 5



It is very grand to "die in harness", but it is very pleasant to have the tight straps unbuckled and the heavy collar lifted from the neck and shoulders. *Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr*



The trouble with retirement is that you never get a day off. *Abe Lemons*

Anger is more destructive than fire or earthquakes. When you get angry, certain glands in your body get activated. This leads to an outpouring of adrenaline and other stress hormones, with noticeable physical consequences. Your face reddens, blood pressure increases, voice rises to a higher pitch, and breathing becomes faster and deeper, your heart beats harder and your arm and leg muscles tighten. Your body becomes tense. The cumulative effect is that anger increases risk of coronary and other life-threatening diseases, like strokes, ulcers and high blood pressure. Better, then, to overcome anger. Burn anger, before anger burns you!

When you are calm, peaceful, happy, digestive processes in your body work normally. When angry, they go for a toss. Doctors recommend remaining cheerful when you eat, for instance. Avoid eating when angry or resentful. Anger affects the entire body; it is poison.

There are three ways to handle anger. Firstly, your expression. Psychiatrists say it is good to express anger for it brings relief, as you have spoken your mind. The relief, however, is temporary. Resentments build up again, and you are ready for another spill out. Gradually, anger becomes a habit and you could become its slave. Anger controls you; it is a terrible master. Secondly, the way of suppression but that's not the right way, as it drives anger into the subconscious and continues to create havoc.

However, neither expression nor suppression is recommended for these do not help you overcome anger. So the third way, that of forgiveness, patience and forbearance, works better. Forgive, and be free! Every night, before you retire, replay the day's happenings. Were

you cheated by someone? Did someone offend you, hurt you or treated you badly? Call out that person's name and say, "X, I forgive you!" You will sleep peacefully.

I recall an incident in the life of the great Prussian king, Frederick the Second. One day, he found one of his servants taking a little snuff from his silver snuffbox.

"Do you like this snuff-box?" asked the king in utter simplicity.

The boy, caught in the act of stealing, felt embarrassed; he did not answer.

Once again, the king repeated the question: "Do you like the snuff-box?"

The boy looked up and said: "Yes sire, it is indeed a beautiful snuff-box!"

"Then", said the king, "take it. For it is too small for the two of us!"

There was a monk who was badly tempered. He lived in an ashram but found it difficult to get along with the ashramites. He decided to leave and live a secluded life in the forest. He thought he could thus overcome anger. In the beginning, he found peace and tranquillity within. He was happy.

One day, he went to the river to fill a jug of water. As he placed the jug on the ground, it toppled over. He picked it up and filled it again. Again, the jug toppled down. He repeated the process a number of times, until finally he lost his temper and smashed the jug to pieces. Then it was that he realised his mistake. "I left the ashram", he confessed to himself, "only to control my anger, but anger has followed me even here into the forest."

It is not individuals or situations that cause anger. It is your own reaction or response to individuals and situations that determines whether you will be angry or otherwise. Therefore, develop the will to control anger.

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Chase A Crooked Shadow

Rajiv Vij

The Artist

Thinking gives off smoke to prove the existence of fire. A mystic sits inside the burning.

There are wonderful shapes in rising smoke that imagination loves to watch. But it's a mistake to leave the fire for that filmy sight. Stay here at the flame's core.

Jalaluddin Rumi



The artist is a receptacle for the emotions that come from all over the place: from the sky, from the earth, from a scrap of paper, from a passing shape, from a spider's web.

Pablo Picasso



A man's work is nothing but this slow trek to rediscover, through the detours of art, those two or three great and simple images in whose presence his heart first opened.

Albert Camus



The aim of an artist is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance.

Aristotle

There was a man who was so disturbed by the sight of his own shadow and so displeased with his own footsteps that he determined to get rid of both. The method he hit upon was to run away from them, so he got up and ran, but every time he put his foot down, there was another step, and all this while his shadow kept up with him too without the slightest difficulty. Wasn't he running fast enough? So he ran faster and faster, without stopping, until he finally dropped dead. If only he'd stepped into the shade, his shadow would have vanished, and if he had sat down and stayed still, there would have been no more footsteps.

This parable is from the Chinese philosopher, Chuang Tzu. So many of our experiences, particularly during the impressionable years of childhood, are based on negative feedback on who we are – supposedly incompetent at many things and incapable of brilliance on numerous occasions and so on.

It's not difficult to imagine then why we grow up feeling incomplete and constantly strive to become perfect – when we can finally convince ourselves, and others, of how good and wonderful we are. This insecurity and sense of incompleteness drives us to chase bigger goals. However, because of the lack of deeper fulfilment, each summit we climb appears only like the bottom of the next peak.

Further, since the reference for determining our greatness is always others, the reality that there's always someone who's stronger, richer, more beautiful or more knowledgeable than us is hard to swallow – “we are disturbed by the sight of our own shadow and weaknesses”. What do we do then, we try even harder – “but the shadow, the

footsteps and our sense of lack won't go away”.

Till we make the paradigm shift. Not by overcoming our weaknesses or negative emotions of self-doubt; or by escaping or ignoring them; but by realising our true nature. It's by developing a deeper understanding of who we are and how whole, complete and perfect we are – even if our conditioned mind would have us believe otherwise.

Once we make that transition, we begin to distance ourselves from our mind and slowly become a witness to the games our mind plays. The mind is a great servant but a terrible master. Gaining greater self-awareness and becoming an observer of our thoughts and feelings, we begin to see how all our negative emotions and the sense of lack is nothing but the perceptions created by our mind.

This shift is transformational. It allows us to leapfrog from the world of duality – being judgmental, seeing everything as good or bad, favourable or otherwise – to one that is absolute; a realisation of the only reality there is – that we are all made of the same universal life energy and are part of the same perfect whole. We become open to the idea of peaceful coexistence of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ in such a well-balanced whole.

This equips us to become aware of any negative thoughts that arise in our mind, acknowledge them and put them aside without delving on them or letting them grow. The acceptance of these thoughts and the accompanying stillness allows us to experience greater peace and that, in turn, empowers our true positives to get strengthened – “if he merely stepped into the shade, his shadow would vanish, and if he sat down and stayed still, there would be no more footsteps”.

personalalchemyblog.org



THE SPEAKING TREE

SACRED SPACE

Gaining Admission

Prayer carries us half way to God, fasting brings us to the door of His palace, and alms-giving procures us admission.

Quran



For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Bible



Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is daily admission of one's weakness. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart.

MK Gandhi



Every victory is only the price of admission to a more difficult problem.

Henry Kissinger



Your head is humming and it won't go, in case you don't know, / The piper's calling you to join him, / Dear lady, can you hear the wind blow, and did you know / Your stairway lies on the whispering wind.

Led Zeppelin,

Stairway to Heaven

Wheel Of Time As Taala

Bindu Chawla

A long time ago Kaala, or Time, took on the metaphor of Kaalachakra, or the wheel of time. Without beginning or end, the clockwise movements turn the end of each time cycle into a beginning – a point known as the sam, or samadhi, the ecstasy of the Merger.

Time as wheel has engaged us more than time as numeric, linear or chronometrical, whose metaphor is the 'arrow of time', and whose sense of the 'beginning and end' of things comes laden with history.

In Hindustani music and dance Kaalachakra is expressed as taala, the rhythm-poem played by percussionists, with which musicians sing or play songs and melodies. In the word 'taala', 'taa', comes from 'taandava' or Shiva's divine energy as he dances, and 'laa', from 'laasya', or divine energy of his consort, Parvati, as she dances. When the two energies interact, and its loud and soft parts speak to and answer each other, taala acquires its pace, walk and gait.

Taala is special because of its yin and yang, the opposites, which are made for each other. Each part has a suggestion of the other in its own 'self'. And that is why when they dance, Shiva and Parvati spin and turn together in tandem as interdependent equals, their taala or consonance a unity of two parts, moving towards the cosmic frame.

The same two parts of the taala – its female and male frames – are finally also metaphors for the worldly and the divine. Referred to as 'bhari' or full (worldly energy) and 'khaali', or empty ('silent' divine energy), they are the chant of time or fullness, and the silent chant of timelessness, the empty zone.

In Buddhism, Kaalachakri is the consort of Kaalachakra, and their mandala is phased in three parts – male, female and divine. Together the male and female become 'the world of fullness' that transcends to 'the world of emptiness', which is the world of the divine.

However, the climax of the story is the 'sam', or the first beat of the beat cycle, with which the taala both ends and begins, its state of divine equilibrium, its point of ecstasy. Short for samadhi or ecstatic spiritual union, it is the sam which constantly turns the flow of time into a flow of timelessness.

Pandit Amarnath of the Indore Gharana would explain that scientifically, taalas are highly charged choreographies in plays of twos and threes, the numbers being the basic units of composed taala. He would say by way of further explanation: "This is because the units can either be even, or they can be odd – seedhaa or aadhaa.

How do multiples of twos and threes give us taalas? Two and two and we get keherwaa, two and three

we get jhampaa, two and four we get daadraa, three and four we get roopak, four and four is called addhaa, means half of teentaala, two and three and two and three becomes jhaptala. Ektaala is two multiplied by six to get twelve. Four into four is teentaala, and so the mutations can go on.

That is how Kaalachakra moves through the realms of duality, the worldly twos, interspersed with non-duality, the divine threes, to constantly locate and reach the third eye of absorption.

In other words, the wheel of time locates samadhi, and its tempo the perennial state of laya, or Timeless Absorption. Laya is a specific formation in tempo, from leen ho jaanaa, or to Merge.



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Divine Feminine

Women are, all of them,
veritable images
of Shakti.

*Ramakrishna
Paramahansa*



The best thermometer to
measure the progress of
a nation is its treatment
of women. There is no
chance for world welfare
unless condition of
women is improved.

Swami Vivekananda



She is not only the power
of God as the whirling
wheel of life in its birth
and death-bringing tota-
lity; she is also the force
of the centre, which bes-
tows consciousness and
knowledge, transforma-
tion and illumination.

Erich Neumann



There is a collective force
rising up on the earth to-
day, an energy of reborn
feminine. She is peeking
around corners, taking
over businesses, tucking
in children, and making
men go wild in every way.

She knows us at our
source. She is not, as we
are not, lacking in virtue.
She remembers our func-
tion on earth: that we
should love one another.

Marianne Williamson

Mind Grows In Magnitude

Shri Shri Anandamurti

The first mental faculty is that the mind thinks: it discovers and invents newer modes of thinking, with concentration – that is, the mind meditates. If it is done in a methodical way, the result of thinking is certainly positive: a negative result is achieved only in rare cases. But if it is not done in a methodical way, the general result is negative: only in rare cases do we get a positive result. So students should be taught how to think in a methodical style, otherwise there will be wastage of mental potentialities.

Regarding thinking with concentration, that is, meditation – it is another, still subtler, science. Meditation should be performed knowing fully well the location of different glands and sub-glands and also the different cells in the human brain. And people should not only know the location of these glands and sub-glands, they should also be acquainted with their respective systems of hormone secretion, otherwise their meditation will not produce any fruit. So for this system of meditation, knowledge of biology is essential. We need to progress and grow to do methodical thinking and meditation based on the location of cells, glands and sub-glands, and their secretion of specific quantities of hormones.

The second mental faculty is that the mind remembers: it discovers or invents different systems of remembering or memorising. While remembering, the mind should know how to associate the object to be remembered with psychic pabula of a similar nature. And we should know how to select these which have similarity or proximity to the object that they want to remember. In the case of memorising there should be both a physical, psychic and spiritual

approach. For the purpose of memorising, we should avoid use of different sub-glands producing inimical hormones. Committing to memory should be associated with qualities and roots of different plexi of the body.

The third faculty which we should know is the process of transmutation and diversion of different psychic pabula in a scientific manner. This may vary from one person or group to another, from animal to animal, from bird to bird. And for this, there should be specific training that teaches how to transmute and divert different psychic pabula, and this should be open to all.

The fourth one is to create more scope for rationality and rationalisation on the different planes of existence – physical, psychic and spiritual. If we want to encourage rationality and rationalisation at the physical level, we must avoid thought waves which originate on the physical plane and concern physical objects. On the psychic level, avoid various psychic forms, ideas and movements, and also those aspects of telepathy or clairvoyance which originate on the psychic plane.

However, there are certain phenomena which occur on a blended plane, for instance on a blending of the psychic and spiritual planes. Only the thought wave which emanates from the spiritual plane could save us from the devastating influence of dogma, which separates one person from another, which creates hindrances in the remoulding of human society into a single existence. This process of rationalisation should be developed through the intrinsic human potential of remodelling every aspect of mind. We need to overcome challenges and create a new world in all the three emanations of life – physical, psychic and spiritual.

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Why So Jealous?

One who does not envy but
is a compassionate friend
to all...such a devotee
is very dear to Me.
Bhagwad Gita 12:15

✦
Avoiding jealousy and
envy and trying to feel
joyful for others' happi-
ness creates much good
karma. Feeling joy also
keeps the mind at peace.
If the mind is jealous and
envious, you will feel very
uncomfortable – like you
have a big stone in your
mind. But feeling joyful
keeps the mind peaceful,
without problems.

Lama Rinpoche

✦
The rot of bones is jealousy.
Talmud

✦
The jealous man lives in
hell. Drop comparing
and jealousy disappears,
meanness disappears,
phoniness disappears.
But you can drop it only
if you start growing your
inner treasures; there
is no other way.

Osho

✦
Avoid jealousy, for it
destroys good deeds as
fire destroys wood.

Hadith 1569

State Of Thoughtlessness

Discourse: Shri Ashutosh Maharaj

Observe your mind. Can you hear the noise of thought currents within? Scientists say 30 to 31 brain waves are constantly in flow. These waves belong to the neuro-linguistic system of our mind. Research indicates that whenever we are engaged in intense mental work, arguments and counter-arguments, the waves are in Beta range. When we take a break from the heavy load of responsibilities and try to relax for a while, the brain emits Alpha waves. During vacation, when we experience the mood of fun, the mind is sending Theta range waves. Even when we are fast asleep, the brain remains active and emanates waves – sometimes Theta and occasionally Delta.

In the mind, the tussle of thought currents continues unabated. The mind remains busy at all times. We could say, the function of the mind is to think and it is acting as per its nature! So let it go... Why mind it?

There is definitely something wrong in it. Think about a machine whose parts are made of metals. If the machine remains functioning without a break, day and night, what will be the result? It will get all heated up. Similarly, the brain, too gets stressed; when thoughts are generated on a continuous basis, it also gets heated up. Anger, tension, agitation – all these are the result of increase in the level of 'temperature' of the brain. Increase in the level of noise pollution is one of the reasons for hypertension, stress and depression. If the noise outside can create such a disastrous situation, think of the impact of internal noise – the dissonance produced by a multitude of thoughts.

If we do not think, how would we work and function? Thinking is not at all wrong. Just

avoid unnecessary thinking that is similar to noise pollution. When a scientist creates an electric circuit, he is always cautious of the 'noise factor', which indicates the 'undesirable electrical disturbance' or the avoidable obstruction. In the presence of such disturbances, the circuit doesn't accept the signals of current properly; it doesn't allow it to pass through in the right measure, nor gives the desired output. Likewise, within the circuit of mind, due to the disturbance of useless thoughts, we are unable to take proper decisions. It hampers our sense of discrimination and a reasonable understanding of the issues.

Buddha used to tell his disciples often, 'Practise peace!' Sufi Saint Rumi proclaimed, "Get liberated from the imprisonment of frightening thoughts. Practise silence." When the mind "dies", silence prevails. Death of mind means controlling the mind to the extent of thoughtlessness. A state in which no useless or disturbing thought is permitted to evolve! Through this thoughtless or say mindful state, the fountain of bliss emerges!

To attain this state, gurus have stressed the need to connect with the inner Self, the source of peace and bliss. Upanishads proclaimed it as Atman gyan or Brahmn gyan. After practically realising the inner Self through the third or divine eye, one can commence the journey of peace to reach the depths within and seek eternal bliss. A true spiritual preceptor activates the third eye of the seeker and enables him to embark upon his inner journey. In that blissful world, thoughts are not admitted. Bliss alone reigns! It is the ocean, diving into which you begin to experience peace. Shri Ashutosh Maharaj is founder and head of Divya Jyoti Jagrati Sansthan. You may follow him on our website www.speakingtree.in



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Voice of Women

As you smell the fragrance of a flower by handling it or that of sandalwood by rubbing it against a stone, so you obtain spiritual awakening by constantly thinking of God.

Sri Sadana Devi



Even though you may want to push God the Mother aside, she will never leave you. Are you not her offspring? A mother gives exactly what is needed, not more, not less. Her forgiveness knows no limits; hence she is called mother.

Anandamayi Ma



Freedom is when you really get your own powers which are within you, in your system and in your conscious mind. You must feel the existence of the Spirit.

Mata Nirmala Devi



Celebrating your femininity is not a crime. So, rejoice in your beauty and softness; don't be ashamed of that.

Anandmurti Gurumaa

Life Is A Palette Of Colours

Discourse: Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

The 'Holi' festival is a fun-filled and popular occasion for celebration. People play Holi with chandan or sandalwood powder and coloured water. The festival is celebrated around early March each year, coinciding with the full bloom of spring.

People believe that bright colours represent energy, life and joy. Huge bonfires are also lit in the evening as part of celebrations.

Life should be full of colours! And each colour is meant to be seen and enjoyed separately, for if they are all mixed together, all the different colours merge and will appear all black. All colours like red, yellow, green and orange should exist side by side and simultaneously be enjoyed together.

Similarly, in life, different roles that are played by the same person should exist peacefully and distinctly inside him. For example, when a father continues to play his role of a 'father' in office, things are bound to go for a toss. In our country, a politician is sometimes a father first and a leader later!

In whichever situation we are in, we should play the corresponding role to the hilt and then life is bound to become colourful! This concept was called 'varnashram' in ancient India. This meant that everyone – whether a doctor, teacher, engineer, father, brother or son – is expected to play their roles with full enthusiasm. Mixing professions will always be counterproductive.

If a doctor wants to do business, he should run a business separately and that should be secondary to his first profession and he should not make business out of medicine. Keeping these 'containers' of the mind separate and distinct is the secret of a happy

life and this is what Holi teaches us.

All colours emanate from white, and when they are mixed together again, they become black. When your mind is white and aware of consciousness – pure, peaceful, happy and meditative – different colours and roles emerge. We get the strength to play various roles with full sincerity against the background.

We have to dip into our consciousness time and again. If we only look at and play around with colours outside of us, we are bound to find blackness all over again. Between roles we have to take deep rests, in order to play each role sincerely. Now, the biggest impediment to deep rest is desire. Desire means stress. Even petty desires cause high stress – the higher goals give relatively less botheration! Desire tortures the mind at times. So what does one do?

The only way out is to focus attention on that desire and surrender it. This act of focussing awareness or sight on the desire is called 'Kamakshi'. With awareness, desire loses its grip and surrender happens and then nectar flows out from within.

The goddess, Kamakshi, holds a sugarcane stem in one hand and a flower in the other. The sugarcane stem is so hard and has to be squeezed in order to obtain sweetness, while the flower is soft and collecting nectar from it is so easy. This truly represents life, which indeed has a little of both! It is far easier to obtain this bliss from the inside than it is to try to extract pleasure from the outside world – which needs a lot more effort. So lift your Spirit with joy of colour!

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Bodyguard And Mindguard

Lama Doboom Tulku

Before You Speak
The disaster-destined
let themselves be
ruled by ego-driven
thoughts, violence,
arrogance, lust and
extreme anger.
Bhagavad Gita 16.18

Those who are clever
in arguments about
Brahmn, but are
without the action
pertaining to Brahmn
(infinite consciousness)
and who are greatly
attached to the world –
those certainly are born
again and again (in this
world) through their
ajnana (ignorance).
Tejobindu Upanishad

Calvin: Sometimes
when I'm talking, my
words can't keep up with
my thoughts. I wonder
why we think faster
than we speak.
Hobbes: Probably so we
can think twice.

*Bill Watterson,
Calvin & Hobbes*

The trouble with
talking too fast
is you may say some-
thing you haven't
thought of yet.
Ann Landers

Generally, people keep all the doors of
their senses open. Seeing this as an
opportunity, troublemakers – klesha
in Sanskrit – make their way into the mind.

According to Buddhist Sutras, the job of
these troublemakers is "to churn the mind".
This means that the nature of the mind is
peaceful and calm, but when churning takes
place, it gets aggravated and agitated, result-
ing in the performing of aggressive acts
that cause hurt to self and others, speech
that is not the truth, or which makes no
sense, and acts that foster hatred. Hence,
looking inward is the essence of spirituality.
Adhyatma vidya or inner science
is what helps us overcome all
these negativities.

Observation of moral codes facili-
tates the mind to remain focussed
on the work at hand. Mindfulness
and awareness are the guards
employed at the door of the
senses. When the mind is protect-
ed from external interventions, it
facilitates concentration on the
work at hand. It also results in
further perfecting moral practices and
rectitude, thus generating higher spiritual
qualities like samadhi or equilibrium, and
prajnaparamita, perfected wisdom.

Earlier Tibetan Kadampa masters
emphasised so much on the importance
of guarding the mind that a whole body of
literature – today known as Lojong – came
into being. These teachings originally came
from the subcontinental region. Acharya
Shantideva of the 11th century states:
"Except the conduct of guarding the mind,
where is the need of many conducts?" A
Kadampa master said, "I have no other prac-
tice except standing at the approach point of

troublemakers, waiting for them with a
spear of antidote."

Formerly a notorious thief in Tibet, Ben
Gungyal went on to become a great teacher.
After renouncing thieving and cheating and
after spending long hours in solitude doing
meditation, he became a respected yogi. Once
he was invited by a family to their house for a
day-long recitation of scriptures. At a point
when the family members stepped out of the
house for some work, the yogi, who was a tea
lover, found the tea he was served a bit too
weak. Looking around, when he found no one
nearby, he walked directly into the kitchen
and located the tea container in which dried
tea leaves were kept. He decided to take some

tea leaves without telling the house-
holder. This act was a result of the
instinct left behind as residual of his
previous deeds. As soon as he put his
hand into the container, his awareness
came to rescue him. He became
aware of this act of his and found
himself shouting: "Thief! Thief!"

When others came running
towards him in response to his
call, they were surprised to find
him holding his own hand. He
told them "I have caught the culprit."

This story is often cited as an example
of self-restraint, awareness and guarding the
door of senses.

It is a good thing to apportion a fixed time
for spiritual pursuits such as prayer, chant-
ing and meditation. But if the doors of the
senses are not guarded for the rest of the
time, you could become vulnerable to klesha.
It will hunt you down and churn your mind.
Then the few hours of prayer or meditation
are less likely to have the desired effect.
That is why sages and seers recommend
continuous practice and mindfulness.

As told to Sudhamahi Regunathan.



THE
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SACRED SPACE

Many Truths

As men approach Me,
so I receive them. All
paths, Arjuna,
lead to Me.

Bhagavad Gita, 4.11



At any time, in any form
and accepted name,
if one is shorn of all
attachment, that one is
you alone. My Lord!
You are one although
variously appearing.

*Hemachandra,
Dvatrimshika 29*



I look at all the major
religions of the world
as one big family.

Unification Church



All truths are easy to
understand once they
are discovered; the point
is to discover them.

Galileo Galilei



There are many truths
of which the full
meaning cannot be
realised until personal
experience has
brought it home.

John S Mill



Faith embraces many
truths which seem to
contradict each other.

Blaise Pascal

Talk: Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

To eradicate corruption we require individuals who are incorruptible and, undoubtedly, what produces such individuals is spirituality. There is a saying that violence begins in the mind. This is true also of corruption: corruption begins in the mind. If we can alter our thinking, we can safely say that we shall have eradicated corruption by at least 50%. What changes the heart and mind for the better is spirituality. When an airplane takes off, it leaves behind everything and reaches a higher plane, at which point it is capable of flying towards its destination without any hurdles. Similarly, a spiritual seeker is able to fly to a higher plane where he is free of negative influences.

There are two aspects to spirituality: theory and practice. Basically, spirituality is a non-materialistic approach to life's issues as opposed to the other approach that is based on materialistic interest. The root cause of corruption is the materialistic approach.

Applied spirituality enables one to infuse daily life with spiritual values and those who do so are able to distance themselves from all kinds of corrupt practices. One aspect of applied spirituality is the duty-consciousness which it induces. A rights-conscious person can see only what is in his own interest, while the duty-conscious person looks to the well-being of others and, in doing so, can never stoop to corrupt practices.

How to inculcate spirituality among people? Basically, it is a part of education, both formal and informal. Education means mind training, with special emphasis on inculcating high values. To spread spiritual values in society, we need value-based education, especially during schooling, which is a preparatory period for

life, and if we want to build a spiritual society, we must adopt a value-based education.

A spiritual perspective makes one evaluate actions in terms of their results – a major factor in having a sense of responsibility. One who cultivates such a perspective is able to see things in terms of value. He is able to differentiate between right and wrong.

There is a saying: "A wise man is one who knows the relative value of things." A wise person is one who has a predictable character. All these qualities stem from spiritual training. It is the responsibility of reformers, therefore, to train people to become duty-conscious – for a duty-conscious person can never involve himself in any negative activity such as corruption.

Spirituality helps keep emotions under control and brings peace of mind. An education system that includes spiritual values in instruction will help students imbibe eternal values and truths that enable them to not only develop their intellectual capacity but also to fulfil their role as responsible human beings in society.

A materialistic person is more concerned with material than with spiritual goals or values. Corruption is a phenomenon of a materialistic society while spirituality is a phenomenon of evolved persons. It is only such persons who can build a non-corrupt society. Spirituality and corruption cannot go together.

If a society is to be free of corruption, it has to be made up of evolved or, at least, evolving individuals who have a fairly strong sense of what is right and what is wrong. This is the only solution to the problem of corruption. This is the right beginning and only the right beginning can make it possible to reach the desired goal.

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The Fast Track

When the fat reserves are used for energy during a fast, this releases the chemicals from the fatty acids into the system which are then eliminated through the organs. Chemicals not found in food but absorbed from one's environment, such as DDT, are also stored in fat reserves that may be released during a fast.

Fasting is an integral part of many of the major religions including Islam, Judaism and Christianity..Healers believe that fasting can do wonders for the human body.

Will Carroll



The one-day fast seems to be the ideal for most, whether you are a novice or experienced faster. By fasting one day a week you are giving your body a much-needed true rest and time to catch up on neglected repair or cleaning. But do check with your doctor first.
'Libra Rising'

The Grand Illusion

Rajiv Vij

One fish said to the other, "Do you believe in this ocean that they talk about?"

This Chinese saying illustrates how narrow our vision of the world and the universe can be. We see the world from our limited perceptual framework. Despite an overwhelming evolution of the human race, the human mind is severely restricted by what it can perceive through the senses.

What we hear is limited by the frequencies our ears can process – dogs can hear many higher frequencies and hence have a very different perception of the same sounds. Our sight is limited by the light frequencies our eyes can relate to; since pit vipers can sense heat from infrared rays they must construct the same world rather differently. If we had a different receiver mechanism, we would be hearing other frequencies and seeing in new ways.

With scientific knowledge, we know that many things are not what they appear to be – the sky isn't blue, only the scattering of the blue light absorbed by the atmosphere makes it appear so; the moon doesn't rise in the night; and the house we live in is not stationary, but rotates along with the earth. Essentially, we see, hear and process what we can and not what reality is.

Truth realisation is not easy. Besides the difficulty, our perceptions are further clouded by our personal thoughts and emotions. A Buddhist verse says: "Is anything on earth universally and unanimously recognised as beautiful? For a lover, a beautiful woman is an object of desire; for the hermit, a distraction; for the wolf, a good meal."

What is the truth, then? Everything in the universe is made up of energy. All beings are manifestations of the same energy. This vital

spiritual force breathes life into every living being and sustains every cell and organism. It's like an enormous field of colourless and odourless energy which encompasses everything and every being that we can imagine – all of that existing, not in isolation or in separation, but in one continuum.

What appears solid is only so because of the frequency of wavelengths that our senses are capable of perceiving. Our minds create a three-dimensional world from this continuum of free-flowing energy, comprising of electrons and neutrons. Like the fish in the Chinese saying, when we cannot see this continuum, we are limited to noticing the individual parts of the creation. As a result, the trees, animals, humans and all other objects seem disjointed from us. 'I' as an individual does not exist, never existed, never will – the sense of 'I' is merely a perception of our limited mind.



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From Einstein we know that matter and energy are interchangeable; they're essentially one. When broken down to its barest form, all matter is the same energy. We can break a glass jar into pieces but each piece, however small, will still be glass. Similarly, know that God is in each one of us, and we are part of the same whole. This knowledge can set us free.

As we make a conscious effort to stay connected with this realisation, we become better equipped to playing the roles of our life – businessman, teacher, wife, father and friend – with tremendous happiness and inner peace. This connection lets us be like an actor who plays her role on stage with great sincerity but stays conscious of the fact that she is really not the character she's playing – and thus not overly identify with the fortunes and misfortunes of her given role!

The writer is a life and executive coach.

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Fast And Furious

Fasting is more than abstaining from food and drink. Fasting also includes abstaining from any falsehood in speech and action.

Acharya Mahaprajna



One purpose in fasting is the achievement of atonement for sins and omissions in divine service. Fasting is not considered the primary means of acquiring atonement; rather, sincere regret for and rectification of wrongdoing is the key.

Jewish tradition



Three words for Narendra Modi to chew on during his three-day fast: Vidhi (law), Vidhaan (the Constitution) and Raj Dharma.

Pankaj Pachauri on Twitter



Self-starvation by fasting is known as Santhara and is supposed to help shed karma. The ritual can be carried out to voluntary death.

Jain tradition

You Don't Have To Be Stupid

Satsang: Swami Sukhabodhananda

I don't have the intelligence to live life wisely, is there a way out?

You are humble enough to ask me this question. Your humility is not an act of stupidity. Secondly, you acknowledge you have been stupid, and any recognition of weakness is a part of strength. Thirdly, being aware of one's helplessness will open up new possibilities of grace.

Life is a combination of ignorance and knowledge. It needs fine-tuning. You have knowledge but if it is not polished with humility and understanding, then such knowledge will not bless you. Look at life with awareness. Everyone at some level is stupid, is helpless and this recognition helps us to act wisely. If people think, "I know, I need not change," such knowledge will bind a person and not free him.

First, don't conclude you don't have intelligence. God has given us this intelligence. But we have to log on to it. You have the power to see, hear, feel, walk and digest and all this is an act of intelligence. The bird has the intelligence to build a beautiful nest, which can protect it from rain. Where did this intelligence come from? It is hidden in us.

Imagine the bird saying, "I can't talk like a man," and feeling miserable... then it will not validate the power to build a nest which is like a waterproof residence. Many of man-made houses leak despite waterproofing.

The greedy mind invalidates the riches of life. So drop this conclusion, "I am not intelligent; I am stupid." 'I am stupid' should not be a conclusion but something to be worked on.

What is stupidity?

Stupidity is unawareness. You are unaware and act as though you know. Drop this drama. Foolishness is a sleep you live in. You can

always wake up. Out of this sleep, you dream and then take the dream to be real. This sleep, filled with dreams, superimposes the world outside and you only see the superimposition. Like how a snake is superimposed on the rope and then you only see the snake and not the rope.

Problems do not make you stupid. A problem is an alarm system which says, act on it and be creative to solve it. Every problem is an invitation for us to be creative. Don't exaggerate a problem or underestimate it or become indifferent to it. When adventurous energy in you is missing, then you feel this pain.

We have both male and female energies in us. Male energy represents adventure while female energy represents compassion. Balance the two. Go trekking, take up a sport, be in the company of people who have adventurous energy.

Is not the basic problem the fear of death?

Death is happening at every moment. Yesterday is dead and you are born today in the present. Death has never been an enemy. The real enemy is your non-acceptance of the flow of life and your rigidity on how life should be. You have treated death as an end of life; in fact, it is a door to a new beginning. Be happy with the door and do not bang yourself against the door.

A man was riding on the horse sitting towards its tail. His wife saw him and screamed at him: "You are so stupid; you have abused this beautiful gift I gave you." The husband answered: "You are stupid and you gave me a stupid horse; it is going in the wrong direction and I am seated in the right direction where I have to go."

People have an answer in spite of being wrong. An answer does not change our life; living and acting wisely does.

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Just Dance

It is childish and ignorant to talk of duality and non-duality; the enlightened ones laugh at all this. However, without such a discussion based on duality and non-duality, it is not possible to clean one's consciousness of ignorance.

Yoga Vasishtha



A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

Bible



We're fools whether we dance or not, so we might as well dance.

Japanese Proverb



Humour is, in fact, a prelude to faith; and laughter is the beginning of prayer. Laughter must be heard in the outer courts of religion, and the echoes of it should resound in the sanctuary.

Reinhold Niebuhr



Do not take life too seriously. You will never get out of it alive.

Elbert Hubbard

Maulana Wahiddudin Khan

Socialisation is the need of every society, promoting as it does harmony and mutual understanding. It is required for a healthy social life, as it encourages people to live as a cohesive group.

There are several ways of engaging in such social behaviour. One effective way is through festivals, especially of the religious kind. Basically, a gathering is simply a gathering but a religious gathering is a gathering plus. Religion gives to it the colour of sanctity. Eid al-Fitr is that kind of social tradition.

Muslims celebrate Eid on the first day of Shawwal, the tenth month of the Hijra calendar, that is, just after the end of the month of Ramadan. While the month of Ramadan is the month of spiritual preparation, the day of Eid is the first demonstration of the spirit of Ramadan.

The day of Eid begins with two units of congregational prayer. This prayer gives a spiritual direction to the festival of Eid. After performing the two-unit prayer, Muslims leave their homes and meet people, both Muslims and non-Muslims. They accept sweets and also offer sweets to others. They say 'mubarakbad', or greetings, to everyone. They wear new clothes, which is a sign of purity and cleanliness.

I was born in a small village in UP in 1925. At that time, the Eid celebrations were very simple, life was natural and totally based on agriculture. It was a time when there was no concept of "we and they". I recall that on the day of Eid, I used to celebrate it in the Muslim tradition and, on the day of Diwali, I used to celebrate the festival of lights as practised by the Hindu community. At the time, I believed that both these festivals were part of our Indian life.

Eid promotes interaction and interaction

Eid, A Social Tradition

leads to discussion and discussion leads to intellectual development. In this sense, Eid as well as other festivals are not only a part of culture, they are a source of education and they promote human values.

Ramadan and Eid are two different sides of the same coin. If Ramadan is spirituality, Eid is a kind of applied spirituality. Ramadan is an inner journey and Eid is like an external journey. Ramadan prepares you to live at a personal level and Eid tells us how to live on a social level. Both are equally important.

On the occasion of Eid, Muslims are enjoined to give sadaqah al-Fitr. The purpose of sadaqah al-Fitr is that even the less privileged can have the means to celebrate Eid along with others on an equal basis.

Sadaqah al-Fitr is an expression of that kind of living in which people share with others. Though sadaqah al-Fitr is a one-day practice of brotherhood, it is a form of training to promote universal brotherhood.

The Prophet of Islam made alms-giving and providing food for the poor obligatory on Eid al-Fitr. It was meant to atone for any sin that may have been committed while fasting during the month of Ramadan.

Ramadan and Eid both represent two different aspects of Islamic life. According to Islamic teachings, there are two periods of life: the present world and the world hereafter. In the present world we are required to fulfil our responsibilities and are promised a reward for our deeds in the world hereafter. Disciplined living in the month of Ramadan represents the first phase of life and celebrating joy and happiness on Eid represents what is expected in the life hereafter.

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Total Surrender

Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear.
Bhagavad Gita 18: 66



God has put you in the world. What can you do about it? Resign everything to Him.

Surrender yourself at His feet. Then there will be no more confusion. Then you will realise that it is God who does everything.
Ramakrishna Paramhansa



Complete surrender does require that you have no desire of your own. You must be satisfied with whatever God gives you and that means having no desires of your own.
Ramana Maharshi



Linguistically, surrender means to surrender to somebody, but religiously, surrender simply means trust, relaxing. It is an attitude rather than an act: you live through trust.

Osho



To surrender to ignorance and call it God has always been premature, and it remains premature today.
Isaac Asimov

Social Significance Of Roza

M A Islahi

After sighting the Ramadan moon, Muslims all over the world observe fasting and refrain from eating, drinking and other physical pleasures from dawn to dusk. This practice continues till the sighting of the new moon. Allah ordains the believer not to take any food or drink throughout the day. However, says the Prophet, roza or fasting becomes worthless if the person observing it continues to engage in negative activity like back-biting and harbours feelings of hatred, jealousy, deceit and corruption.

Elaborating on the significance of the Ramadan fast, the Prophet once said, "Roza is a shield" that protects us from misfortune, malaise and untoward happenings. After describing roza as a shield, the Prophet explained the use of this shield by saying that whenever anyone proceeds towards you with nefarious intentions, you should tell him, "I am observing roza." During my tenure in Kashmir University, I did just that when some rowdy elements came in my way and started using unsavoury and indecent language, calling me names, including that of "traitor". Initially, I tried my best to pacify them, but all my efforts fell on deaf ears. They raised their voices and started abusing me further. Given the situation I said calmly, "I am on roza." I repeatedly said this and remained cool and quiet.

They left me, saying that they would teach me a lesson. The incident left me perturbed for a long time. Since the Valley was in turmoil following the murder of the Kashmir University vice-chancellor, Prof. Mushirul Haque, I resolved not to lose heart, and remained busy with my usual work, trying all the while to remain calm.

A month or so after the said incident, a few of those rowdy elements came to meet me. Seeing them, I thought perhaps some new developments had taken place. This is why they were there. However, I remained calm and composed. One of them broke the silence and told me that they had come to apologise for their past action because they had behaved badly with me thinking I was someone else. It was a case of mistaken identity.

They were extremely sorry for being harsh and unkind towards me. In fact, I had tolerated their misdemeanour because of roza, the shield. The whole process of roza teaches us not only to control our physical desires; it also helps us curtail our anger, haughtiness and obstinacy. In other words, fasting empowers us spiritually. It provides us greater opportunity for meditation.

Fasting inculcates in us a sense of sharing and, therefore, we feel compassion for all beings. One who observes roza becomes kind-hearted and avoids crudeness while dealing with others. There is greater understanding.

If only we could extend or prolong the feeling of compassion and oneness that fasting infuses in us, it would make the world a very pleasant place to live in. Hasn't this been the long cherished hope and prayer of every prophet, reformer and social activist? Roza assists us in fostering a sense of universal brotherhood and this is perhaps why Prophet Mohammed had given roza a special status among all the tenets of Islam by quoting Divine words wherein God says, "Roza is mine, and I will personally award those who observe fast." These Divine words, unequivocally, reflect the role of roza in attaining spiritual sublimity.

The writer is professor of Arabic and chairperson of the Centre of Arabic and African Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University.



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Time To Act

You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty.

Bhagavad Gita 2:47



Do not be wise in words – be wise in deeds.

Jewish Proverb



All know the way; few actually walk it.

Bodhidharma



We should be taught not to wait for inspiration to start a thing. Action always generates inspiration. Inspiration seldom generates action.

Frank Tibolt



An idea not coupled with action will never get any bigger than the brain cell it occupied.

Arnold Glasgow



Action is the last resource of those who know not how to dream.

Oscar Wilde



Talk doesn't cook rice.

Chinese Proverb

De Ghumake: Should We?

Rudroneel Ghosh

Indian cricket team captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and social activist Anna Hazare may belong to different worlds. Yet, they both evoke one song: De Ghumake. The title of the official theme song of the 2011 cricket World Cup that was held a few months ago, translates to "hit hard" in English. The song would be as apt for the 74-year-old Gandhian as the swashbuckling Dhoni. Both have captured the imagination of Indian youth and created a sense of euphoria, setting new trends.

Cricket is a good metaphor for India's youth story. The young want instant gratification; they want results *now*. Spectacular sixes are preferred to boring ones and twos. They want the heat and won't rest till they achieve it. Such high expectations, though admirable, leave little room for introspection. Young people end up idolising those who promise them the moon and they accept it without questioning the means of reaching there. Win the World Cup De Ghumake. Shun corruption now: De Ghumake.

Aren't we missing something?

The obsession with results can easily come back to haunt us. Take, for example, the increasing popularity of T20 cricket. The shortest format of the gentleman's game is built on the reward-humiliation mentality. The day belongs to the victor, losers be damned. Such arrogance prevents us from appreciating the finer art of cricket as epitomised by traditional Test matches. The latter are meditative and force both player and spectator to look within. Every ball is judged on its merit, every shot on its prudence. But who has the time for such subtleties?

As thousands throng to support Hazare's crusade against corruption, the subtleties seem to be lost on the youth, once again. In the

carnavalesque heat of the moment, the need for a sustainable campaign against corruption has taken a back seat to the desire for immediate gains. This is not unlike Team India's recent bungling in England. They went into the bilateral Test series on the back of the euphoria of being crowned World Champions. Yet, under tough conditions, the team crumbled. They simply did not have the mental toughness or the staying power to emerge victorious. The De Ghumake attitude couldn't come to their rescue.

To be a productive force, young people must learn to value patience and longevity. They must not shy away from putting in the hard yards, no matter how much time that takes. But most of all, they must learn to introspect. Pablo Neruda in *Keeping Quiet* stresses the need for silence to break the monotony of activity to better understand ourselves. The De Ghumake attitude must be replaced with foresight and dedication.

As the youth today look to purge India of the menace of corruption and acquire a better quality of life, they should re-examine the long-term validity of the De Ghumake mantra that carries the risk of being one-sided and in haste. Just like a chess player meditating on his next move, the youth should ask some tough questions: Where am I heading? What are the consequences of my action? What kind of a world do I want to leave behind for the next generation?

Let's not forget that at the end of the day, we have only ourselves to answer to. It is worth waiting for something that promises to be substantial rather than clamour for something that could be momentary.

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With Folded Hands

Prayer restrains one from shameful and unjust deeds; and remembrance of God is the greatest thing in life, without doubt.

Quran 29.45



The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.

Psalms 145.18



The greatest prayer is patience.

Gautama Buddha



Our prayers should be for blessings in general, for God knows best what is good for us.

Socrates



Faith induces one to pray. Prayer purifies the heart.

In the purified heart is reflected the light of Lord. When the light shines, the mortal becomes immortal.

Swami Sivananda



The first requirement for prayer is silence. People of prayer are people of silence.

Mother Teresa



Prayer is the highest form, the supreme act of the Creative Imagination.

Henry Corbin

Attachment And Liberation

Talk: Mohanji

Liberation is not escapism. Escapism is running away from dharma or duty. It is natural detachment, without effort, while performing dharma with detachment—like the sun or a flowing river. No object on earth can make us happy or sad. We become perpetually self-sufficient.

The nature of our soul is liberation. It takes the subtle body through many births and deaths, but never gets contaminated. It is pure as ever. We have never considered the soul. Every thought, word and action brings attachment. Every meeting is with expectation. Every decision is expected to bring results. Results are bound to happen. That's the nature of action. Attachment to results and expectations causes bondage. We suffer. The moment we shift from expectations to pure action, we become liberated.

All attachments, relationships and expectations are bondage. The guru can be bondage. Disciples can be bondage. Body, mind and intellect are bondage. All samskaras are bondage. Thus, life is full of visible and unseen bondages. This makes liberation even more difficult.

The best way to transcend bondage is through higher awareness. It is like graduating to higher classes in school. Awareness level keeps changing; we become aware of things we were not aware of earlier. Clarity improves and dependency reduces. Habits change. When a habit is replaced with deep, pregnant silence of spirituality, we are liberated. Need for action is formed out of samskaras.

When samskaras reduce, actions reduce, too. But we fill the space with more samskaras. We are afraid to die. The birth-death cycle has become our habit because of repetition over

lifetimes. Anything can bind us and keep us away from liberation. Our identifications such as name, shape, nationality, religion and everything else make death painful. Even a mirror can prevent a smooth exit. A mirror re-establishes our physical image into our psyche so much that when the soul departs the body, it feels lost. It stays on. It refuses to transcend. So if you look deeply, you can see that many things hinder our progress. In that situation, if you are still able to translate knowledge into wisdom and experience wisdom, which nullifies the push of samskaras, then life becomes easier—transit becomes effortless.

Nothing is either good or bad. There are no dos and don'ts. These are all created by our mind. What is right for us is the exhaustion of our karmas, whatever it takes. Whatever is right for the soul is to stay as the soul, without the baggage of karmas and the push for many rebirths. Right and wrong are relative and they also shift modes time after time. Nothing is permanent in terrestrial existence. If we can fully understand this fundamental truth, we are relatively better off.

Liberation needs serious practice. We cannot suppress karmas and attain liberation. We have to exhaust karmas and get there. We have to grow with awareness and detach because we do not need it.

When the world was speaking about “haves” and “have-nots”, India always had a third segment—the truly liberated Masters who had everything but wanted nothing. They lived in plenty with no need of any terrestrial objects. Terrestrial love is temporary and often conditional. Soul is liberated and unconditional. That is the shift that we are talking about here: the shift from our limited mind to the unlimited soul.

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Uplifting Music

Celebration is possible only when existence is a continuous newness, and existence is always young.

It is an inner music flowing. Whether you play an instrument or not is not the point, the music is flowing.

Osho



Music without words means leaving behind the mind. And leaving behind the mind is meditation. Meditation returns you to the source. And the source of all is sound.

Kabir



The journey back to God starts with crying out to God. We will then be put in touch with the divine Light and Sound of God. This internal music will carry us from this physical world into the Beyond.

Sant Rajinder Singh



Music produces a kind of pleasure which human nature cannot do without.

Confucius

Like The River And Ocean

Satsang: Sri Chinmoy

I n the highest state of samadhi, when you look at other people, what kind of consciousness do you feel in them?

When one is in the highest transcendental samadhi, the physical personality of others disappears. We do not see others as human beings. We see only a flow of consciousness, like a river that is entering into the ocean. He who is in the highest trance becomes the ocean, and he who is in a lower state of consciousness is the river. The river flows into the sea and becomes one with the sea. The one who is enjoying the highest samadhi does not notice any individuality or personality in others. A human being who is not in this state of samadhi is a flowing river of consciousness, while the one who is in samadhi has become the sea itself, the sea of peace and light.

Do you teach your disciples any specific technique for attaining samadhi?

No. Samadhi is a very high state of consciousness. If the beginner comes to kindergarten and asks the teacher how he can study for his Master's degree, the teacher will simply laugh. He will say, "How can I tell you?" Before we are ready to try to attain samadhi, we have to go through many inner spiritual experiences. Then there comes a time when the Master sees that the student is ready to enter into savikalpa samadhi or a temporary state of dissolution. Nirvikalpa samadhi or absolute dissolution is out of the question for seekers right now. One has to be a most advanced seeker before he can even think of attaining savikalpa samadhi.

Nirvikalpa samadhi one gets only in the highest stage of aspiration. Some disciples

are very sincere and devoted, and make very fast progress; but the time has yet to come for them to think of entering into samadhi. For all seekers I wish to say that the spiritual ladder has quite a few rungs. We have to climb up one step at a time. Samadhi, for my disciples and for the vast majority of spiritual seekers on earth, is a far cry right now.

Why does a seeker need a guru?

Without a guru, your progress will be slow and uncertain. You may get high, elevating experiences and not give them adequate significance. Or doubt may enter your mind, and you may think, "I am just an ordinary person, so how can I have that kind of experience?"

Perhaps I am deluding myself." Or you will tell your friends about your experiences, and they will say, "It is all a mental hallucination!" But if there is someone who knows what the inner reality is, he will be able to assure you that the experiences which you have are absolutely real.

The Master encourages the seeker and inspires him. And if the seeker is doing something wrong in his meditation, the Master is in a

position to correct him.

Once you complete a course, you no longer need a teacher. If you want to learn how to sing, you go to a singer and learn from him. If you want to be a dancer, you go to a dancer. Once you become a good singer or dancer, you don't have to go to the teacher anymore. In the spiritual life it is the same. You need help in the beginning, but once you become extremely advanced, you will not need anybody's help.

Today is Sri Chinmoy's 80th birth anniversary. srichinmoy.org

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Believe It Or Not

Believe nothing./ No
matter where you read
it./ Or who has said it./
Not even if I have said it./
Unless it agrees with
your own reason/ And
your own common sense.

Gautama Buddha



Be an atheist if you want,
but do not believe in any-
thing unquestioningly.

Swami Vivekananda



The constant assertion
of belief is an
indication of fear.

JKrishnamurti



This is my simple religion:

There is no need for
temples; no need for
complicated philosophy.
Our own brain, our own
heart is our temple; the
philosophy is kindness.

The XIV Dalai Lama



Everybody that is just
is called to form part of
the Kingdom of Heaven –
whether they be Buddhas,
Jews or Atheists – as long
as they are good.

Pope John Paul II



If there were no God,
there would be
no Atheists.

GK Chesterton

Cosmic Sacred Syllable

K P Shashidharan

There are three levels of consciousness in the human mind at any given point of time – relatively being conscious; the unconscious; and the subconscious.

Being wakeful is not an absolute state of mind; it's relative because the mind is partially in a state of dreaming and, to a lesser degree, in deep slumber, too. Precisely, the predominance of the stage in which we are decides the state of mind at any given moment of time.

Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Sikh scriptures eulogise the power of the sacred syllable Aum. It is the seed mantra, epitomising Brahm, the Supreme Consciousness or what could be described as the eternal universal energy flow. It signifies the first vibration, the energy that created the universe, encapsulating in it simultaneously the microcosm of the individual and the cosmos.

In Jainism, Aum is the one syllable forming out of the initials of the five prameshtis or hierarchy; in Buddhism, it is the bija or seed mantra beginning with the mystical six syllables of Aum mani padme hum, meaning "The jewel of enlightenment is in the heart lotus"; in Sikhism, Ik Onkar represents monotheism, meaning "There is one God."

The syllable Aum encompasses three phonemes: 'A', 'U' and 'M' symbolising Creation or the beginning, preservation or duration and, thirdly, dissolution or destruction. These are the very cycles of life and death in nature in the universe associated with the gods Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara or Shiva.

Scientifically it is interpreted as follows: 'A' (aaa) stands for the right portion of the brain; 'U' (ooo) for the left part of the brain; and 'M' (mmm) signifies the emotional element of the living. 'A' also signifies earth, trees or any other

object; 'U' symbolises formless elements such as water, air, fire; and 'M' represents neither shape or shapelessness but still exists like the energy content of the universe.

Krishna says to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita: "I am the father of the universe, the mother, the support and the grandsire. I am the object of knowledge, the purifier and the syllable Aum." Ramakrishna Paramahansa would say that by chanting the syllable Aum, one could hear the roar of the ocean arising spontaneously from within, beginning from the navel upwards. Following its trail, he says, the seeker could achieve absolute peace in merging with the Supreme Consciousness.

Aum symbolises the seven levels of consciousness; it could be chanted in seven different ways: Pulsating repetition, with the flow of breath, as the object we call the universe, as sound vibration of the cosmos, all-pervading – keeping in mind the gross, subtle and causal planes, as something that reflects waking, dreaming, and deep sleep and, lastly, as that which connects consciousness with the unconscious and subconscious mind, integrating different planes of mental states.

The mantra denotes transition from the relative to the absolute and the journey back to the relative; like a weight falling into the lake of the mind, creating ripples of wakefulness and making visible stages of dormancy and consciousness. Aum is much more than an intonation; it is revered as the music of the soul, the ultimate prayer by the created to the Creator, helping the helpless human mind to transcend beyond all boundaries of sorrow and sensory perception towards harmony, peace, and solace with Self, moving towards Supreme Bliss.

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One Day At A Time

Each today, well-lived,
makes yesterday a
dream of happiness and
each tomorrow a vision
of hope. Look, therefore,
to this one day, for it and
it alone is life.

*Kalidasa,
Ushavandanam*



Do not dwell in the past;
do not dream of the
future, concentrate
the mind on the
present moment.

Gautama Buddha



So do not worry about
tomorrow, for tomorrow
will worry about itself.
Each day has enough
troubles of its own.

Matthew 6:34



You are either in the past
or in the future – both are
non-existent. You can't
do anything with the
past, nor with the future.

All that you can do is
with the present, and if
you are engaged some-
where else, it simply
slips by and you have
missed the train.

Osho



With the past, I have
nothing to do; nor with
the future. I live now.

Ralph W Emerson

Fuel That's Available In Plenty

P V Vaidyanathan

If life is a journey, and the human being is the vehicle, then the best fuel for a successful completion of this journey is love. This is a secret that is known to all, but implemented by few. And when we substitute some other emotion and make it our fuel, the vehicle cannot perform as well as it should. The journey of life is then no longer smooth, but becomes jumpy, noisy, bouncy, uncomfortable and prone to frequent breakdowns, and constantly needing help from others to set it right.

Unlike fossil fuels which are used in actual vehicles, the fuel called love is available in plenty and is unlikely to become depleted. Every human being born on this planet is a source of this fuel called love. He is capable of loving 24X7. Love is our natural state. Unfortunately, this natural state gets corrupted, resulting in adulterated fuel being produced and used to run life.

Love works slowly as compared to its opposite emotions, fear and hate. Though love is natural, hate and fear come to us more easily. If you want to get a group of people together for a common cause and under a common banner, love for something might take you years to unite them. Hate and fear can work in a matter of minutes. Hence, the natural enemies of love are much more powerful and appealing. Love appeals to the true being or soul, while the mind thrives on hate and fear.

Why does fear predominate our lives, when we all know that love is the true fuel of life? This is where the mind comes in. Our true being or spirit thrives only on love. But between our spirit and body is another

important entity, the mind.

The control of our lives, instead of being in the hands of the spirit, has been taken over by the mind. And the mind is a very complex entity. It is logical and illogical, rational and irrational, good and bad, loving and hating, giving and grabbing, killing and rescuing, full of hope and help, while also filled with hopelessness and helplessness, simultaneously. The mind is a paradox, unpredictable and unknown, with its own way of functioning. It is volatile and restless, but yet, it constantly seeks peace, stillness and stability.

To be with the mind means our lives would be like a roller-coaster ride. The stability and stillness that we seek in our lives, the rest and relaxation that we crave, the peace and calmness that we desperately need, are not to be found in the arena of the mind. If they are found, they will come coupled with their respective opposites. This is the duality of life. Duality is always of the mind. The spirit or soul is always one. And it needs only one fuel and that is love.

One cannot get love without first giving love. That is the law of Nature. In existence, giving comes before receiving, sowing comes before reaping. But most of us seek and hope to receive without wanting to give. So, first give love if you want to be loved. And then we will receive love, a thousand times more.

It needs us only to take the first small step of giving. The Buddha used to say to his disciples, "If you knew what I know, about the power of giving, you would not have a single meal in your life without first sharing it with someone."

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Keep Your Cool

One who has control over the mind is tranquil in heat and cold, in pleasure and pain, and in honour and dishonour; and is ever steadfast with the Supreme Self.
Bhagavad Gita, 6:7



The strong is not the one who overcomes people by his strength, but the strong is the one who controls himself while in anger.

*Hadith,
Sahih Al-Bukhari*



Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret – it leads only to evil.
Psalms 37:8



Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned.
Gautama Buddha



Before you give someone a piece of your mind, make sure you can get by with what is left.
Author unknown

Mind Power And Corruption

Anil K Rajvanshi

The first casualty of corruption is governance. Corruption cannot be stopped only by making better and harsher laws. Laws need to be implemented efficiently and this can happen with good governance. A better way to reduce corruption is for each of us to reduce our greed. With reduced greed and better implementation of existing laws, corruption can be effectively capped.

Besides fuelling corruption, greed for resources and material objects is also creating an unsustainable lifestyle. An emotionally satisfying and decent lifestyle is possible with much less energy consumption than that of the US. This will put much less pressure on the earth's resources and reduce pollution. Simply follow the maxim of "simple living and high thinking".

The basis of greed is desire. Desire manifests itself in different forms like lust, aim, ambition, control and goal. However, the driving force is the same – power, fame, money and control.

The brain develops right from birth and fast expanding neuron numbers form memory pathways. This process is accomplished by sensory perception with inputs from the senses helping form memory. We are hard-wired to increase our experience and memories and this is the basis of desire.

An outcome of desire is possession. We feel a need to possess whatever we desire – whether it is a person, object or idea. Possession helps in maximisation of experience. As we absorb experience through our senses, the brain processes this information. It is during this process that we "decide" whether our desires are fulfilled or not. Fulfilment of desires therefore helps us in releasing the "possessions". Unfulfilled desires

lead to frustration and this makes us want more. This leads eventually to more control and greed, the major causes of corruption.

When concentration on a single thought is carried out regularly and continuously for a long time, it helps produce a powerful mind and this is the essence of yoga. This allows us to think deeply and concentrate whereby we can get "lost" in processing that information. Such a mind also makes us sensitive and humble, changes our priorities in life and helps us focus on getting personal happiness through mental peace rather than satisfaction of material needs. Besides, it reduces our insecurities and hence gives us a feeling of calmness, well-being and happiness.

A powerful and sensitive mind becomes empathetic to its surroundings and gives rise to the desire to give back something to society and help less fortunate fellow beings.

Creation of a powerful mind should start from childhood when brainpower is at its peak. When we focus on reading, thinking and contemplation, we can grow to be better human beings and form a gentler and more sustainable society. A small individual step towards a corruption-free society should therefore start being taken in school.

With their resources and wealth, captains of the corporate world can create conditions for job generation and for improving the quality of life. For this they need to reduce their greed and not get caught in keeping up with the Joneses by acquiring bigger jets, higher turnover, greater profit – the wish list goes on.

Only when all of us become internally secure and reduce our greed would we be able to give something back to society and lay the foundation for a sustainable and corruption-free India.

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Out Of Ignorance

Ignorance is failure to discriminate between what is permanent and what is impermanent; pure and impure, bliss and suffering, Self and non-Self.

Sage Patanjali



The essence of knowledge is, having it, to apply it; not having it, to confess your ignorance.

Confucius



Where ignorance is our master, there is no possibility of real peace.

The XIV Dalai Lama



I took a closer look./ There is no such thing as ignorance./ Ignorance is nothing/ But my limited knowledge.

Sri Chinmoy



Knowing much is ignorance; Knowing only One is wisdom.

Veda Bharti



The highest form of ignorance is when you reject something you don't know anything about.

Wayne Dyer

Simply Be In The Now

Dhruva Bhargava

Daily, we tend to flow with "what-is-gone" and "what-is-yet-to-come" – that is, we function with an eye on the past and one on the future – a habit born of social conditioning. At birth we were simply 'being' – spontaneous, without any concern of "what-is-gone" and "what-is-yet-to-come".

As we grow into adulthood, we begin to think of past and future, agonising over the former and worrying about the latter. So worrying and getting anxious has become our way of experiencing life. We have been conditioned that way.

However, we worry in the 'now'. The past is gone but we insist on recollecting any scars in the present, keeping them alive. The future is uncertain; it is yet to come; we keep scratching our heads for the same in the now. Is there no escape? Ordinarily, we are not at all aware of 'now' because of sensation of time. Time is neither stable nor permanent; it is transient. Time is moving; it is impermanent, and so it is 'not'. Identifying with time is like identifying with that which is not.

However, 'being' is never transient for being means 'to exist'. Only existence exists. Being and existing are synonymous, and to exist means to exist now. If we identify ourselves with now, we are 'being' – in the eternal present.

Our desires and cravings are time-bound. They tend to rise and fall with time. We hope to fulfil our cravings and desires in future-time. However, if these desires and cravings are not fulfilled then they remain as unfulfilled desires of past time as memories that keep haunting us.

Craving and desires thus create sensation of time as we oscillate between past and future and so we are unable to hold ourselves in the

now. We consequently drift from the very being-ness which is our original nature, a spontaneous being as-it-is. The moment we drift away from being or life we become non-being or non-life. Being means to exist; it is that which is real. All non-being is non-existing and therefore unreal. All that is unreal is illusory. From the standpoint of being there is no secondary being, reality or even non-reality. There is only one reality, and that is now.

Since 'being' and 'existence' are the only reality, they are infinite. The rest are subject to measurement, movement, space-time and are therefore finite. Being or life, is independent of time and therefore it's timeless.

In being is pure awareness or life or whatever else we may call it. It is the very existence or being-ness which is prior to any conditioning, thought, personality, i-ness or any physical form. All these are our secondary identities. They arise subsequent to and over and above our being, the very existence, that which is eternally present. However, we carry these false and illusory identities with us throughout our lives. They are the very basis of our desires and cravings.

Thus an endless cycle is created wherein secondary identities give rise to desires and craving and vice versa. They take us away from true being-ness and the moment we drift away we lose the spontaneity, abundance and unconditional love that we already are. We instantly become finite from the infinite being and existence.

The key lies in being constantly aware of cravings and desires. This awareness can prevent us from drifting away from the very being, existence and help us to be in the now, the eternal present. Our being-ness is always in the now. You alone exist as being in the now.

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Tiger Talk

A good captain has to be totally above board.

Complete integrity is essential, nobody should feel that you are either supporting or helping someone at the expense of others, or that you are not thinking of the team.

Especially in the Indian context, where you have a tremendous mix of backgrounds and cultures, languages and regional set-ups and so on, the captain must be a total team man.

*Mansur Ali Khan
'Tiger' Pataudi*



At 20, Tiger lost the vision in his right eye in a car accident.

But he continued to play cricket and became captain of the Indian cricket team

at 21. He would see two balls at once. Yet he learned to focus on one image – that of the actual

ball. He played on, wearing a patch over the injured eye. He was determined to go on.

*Shahryar Khan,
former Pakistan Cricket
Board chief, on his cousin
'Tiger' Pataudi*

Sink Or Swim In The Sea Of Life

Mangesh Ghogre

After years of gazing wistfully at the pool, I recently decided to brave it and take the plunge. Learning to swim was an interesting experience and, to top it all, I found it gave me new spiritual insight!

First, learning in general helps you stay afloat in life. Fear of drowning is one reason why many hesitate to learn swimming. Similarly, for fear of failure, we hesitate to dream big or pursue ambitions. We worry about getting drowned in a sea of challenges, problems and roadblocks. We think the world is out there to take us down.

To return to the pool, I now realise that water is not a threat; in fact water helps us survive. Breathing is second nature to us; hence it is a big challenge for water to drown us. I am surprised at how well our body is equipped with natural survival instincts to help us float and not drown. All we have to do is to use that potential to stay afloat.

In life, each one of us is blessed with unique survival skills that we call talent. We need to appreciate these virtues which shall help us swim in the sea of life. Instead of fearing getting drowned, one should drown fear itself. Swimming then will come to be as easy as breathing.

My second lesson came when I learned how to coordinate my hand and leg movements. My hands had to push the water back so I could swim ahead. This was akin to overcoming hindrances in life's path, in order to make progress. The more water we push behind, the farther we swim. Even more important is the principle that when my hand movements get streamlined with movement in water, progress is faster and smoother. There-

fore, when we handle problems in alignment with our strengths and weaknesses, we handle those problems better. On the other hand, when we are just splashing water and are not making best use of our talents or find ourselves in the "wrong job", we encounter frustration or failure. All the more reason for us to understand our strengths and accordingly align our goals and ambitions.

Lessons from the leg movement also did not go unnoticed. Contrary to the backward hand push, the legs have to be moved downwards. Basically, the more you push the water down, the more you remain up. This goes contrary to popular understanding that to float one has to push or hold the body up.

An instance of seeing this fallacy in action is when a person who does not know how to swim is scrambling to stay afloat. I learnt that if one just keeps pushing the water down, it is hard for the person to drown. Just as if we continue to keep pushing negative thoughts down, we will continue to keep our chin up and so stay afloat. When we panic, we lose sight of this simple principle.

The symphony of swimming occurs when hand and leg movements are in tandem. If the movements are not in sync, either we tend to drown or we don't move ahead much. Similarly, when we align our strengths to push obstacles behind, stay enthusiastic and push down negative thoughts, swimming in the sea of life seems so effortless. This in a way is akin to our own ego becoming one with that of the water.

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Personal Excellence through Bhagavad Gita – a three-day discourse by Swami Sukhabodhananda would be held at Hyderabad. Contact: 27896566, 9848190339. www.prasannatrust.org

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Colours Of Love

Like Holi, life should be colourful, not boring. When each colour is seen clearly, it is colourful. When all the colours get mixed... you end up with black... Harmony in diversity makes life vibrant, joyful and more colourful.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar



Clouds come floating into my life, no longer to carry rain or usher storm, but to add colour to my sunset sky.

Rabindranath Tagore



Raasilila, the unending play of uninterrupted, unfettered love is Krishna's everlasting divine world, Nityaloka. Its worldly manifestation, in realms beyond Kala or Time, was held in Vrindavan.

Sree Sree Ma



When entire Creation is the cosmic lila of God, why demarcate a few and sing in terms of those few?

Sathya Sai Baba

You Need To Overcome Fear

Discourse: Swami Sukhabodhananda

Most often, our lives are wasted in fear! In order to drive away darkness from his house, one man was found carrying out bucketloads of darkness and emptying them – a futile task. His preoccupation with driving out darkness took him nowhere. Darkness is absence of light. If only he had attempted to light a small lamp, darkness would have disappeared!

Fear is like darkness. Absence of love is fear. Once the lamp of love is lit, fear would disappear. How does love blossom between a man and a woman, for example? Love is born out of trust. If two individuals don't trust each other, there can be no love or affection between them.

Here's a Sufi story: Mullah Nasruddin was married just that morning. The same night, he and his wife were travelling in a boat across a river, along with their relatives. Suddenly, a storm broke out, making the river turbulent. The boat was rocking wildly. Everyone including the bride was full of fear. But Mullah Nasruddin remained calm. The surprised bride asked, "Aren't you afraid?" Mullah, without replying, took out a dagger from his waistband and raised it as though he was going to slit her throat. There was no reaction on her face. He asked, "Are you not afraid of the dagger?" and she said, "The dagger could be dangerous, but the person who is holding it, is my loving husband. So I am not afraid." "Exactly!" exclaimed Mullah. "These waves may be dangerous but Allah who is moving them is full of love. So I am not afraid!"

Mullah Nasruddin had implicit faith in Allah. Hence, he was loving and compassionate. Without love and compassion even Mullah would have trembled with fright, just

like others in the boat.

If we are afraid, it only means that we do not trust existence. We would have come across many who say, 'I am God-fearing!' This is nonsense. We should love God, not fear Him. It should be 'God loving', not 'God fearing'.

Swami Vivekananda said, "Be fearless. Fearlessness is the message of the Upanishads." Some go from one astrologer to another with their horoscopes to find out when death would strike them. To them, horoscopes are 'horrorscopes'. They are more afraid of when they would die rather than what they would do while alive. This fear could devastate them both mentally and physically.

While talking about mortal fear, Rabindranath Tagore said, "Long before you were born in this world, compassionately, God made sure that there was milk in your mother's breast. So, have faith."

Those of you who are afraid... plan for your future; there is no harm in that. But when you fear the future, it will ruin your happiness. In order to protect your wealth, plan where to keep it safe; plan how to insure it against theft... To live in fear, without doing any of these things is meaningless.

Instead of conjuring fearful images like 'What if I fail in the examination?' – and thus spending time weakening yourself, use it fruitfully to prepare and pass the examination. Life is a series of examinations; we need to pass them with flying colours. This is a gift we can offer to God. Faith does not crave for miracles. But it often happens miraculously. Faith does not move mountains but gives the power to climb one. Help is just a prayer's length away. Good understanding is better than silver or gold. So experience the richness of love and fearlessness.

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Examination Tension

Doing away with examinations is not a solution to end such tension. Competition is a part of life and cannot be eliminated...Living honourably is also an examination. Our success depends upon our attitude. When we are positive and take a positive outlook at what confronts us, we are successful...Our attitude and confidence will take us towards success along with awareness of our own strengths and limitations.

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Literature, music and the arts, all are necessary for the development and flowering of a student to form an integrated total personality.
Rabindranath Tagore



Striving for success without hard work is like trying to harvest where you haven't planted.

David Bly



An ounce of practice is worth more than tons of preaching.

MK Gandhi

Janina Gomes

Well, this time it was a sprain in my foot. Last time it was problems with fluctuating blood pressure; before that it was high cholesterol levels. All these have given me physical limits to what i can do. But, i continue to focus on what i can still do and that is a lot. I know now that my cup can hold just this much of experience. I do not stretch myself to infinity. Instead, i live within my limitations.

Metaphorically speaking, each one of us has a cup-like receptor that takes in experiences. It is not for us to determine the size. That cup can hold all the experiences of a lifetime and overflow. If we are not stingy and small-minded, we will welcome many good experiences and goodness always overflows naturally.

There have been many seasons in my life. When the going was good, my cup of joy was full. When the way ahead was hard, my cup of sorrow was full. Sometimes, there was so much of excitement and enthusiasm, that there was an overflow. Other times, the road was dry and barren. I did manage to fall into potholes of stagnancy. When the way was all uphill, i was held by supporting hands. When i tasted the calm and tranquility of peaceful hours, i was as it were, lulled into a quiescent state of being.

It was by divine design that i was a human being with limitations. My cup of life was meant to hold just this much, not more. I was made to be comfortable in the environment around me. Like fish struggling on land and completely at ease in water, i too was made to flourish in certain circumstances and not in others.

The cup that overflows is the cup of peace

What My Cup Can Hold

and joy. These cannot be contained. They are infectious, as is the laughter of little children. With such joy, there can be no comparisons. It overcomes boundaries and barriers and enfold others.

I was not made to overcome great heights, but to rise above small hills and mountains. I have been content and happy with small achievements. That was as much as my cup of life could hold. Whenever i have gone beyond myself, my cup has overflowed.

All the empowerment i have experienced in life has come because these were the memories my cup could hold. Deep self-doubt was thus converted to deep self-confidence. The empowerment came not from unlimited exposure but from limited experiences that are part of every human being's life.



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Today i count myself lucky that my cup has been able to hold this much. I don't aspire for the impossible. I have my faults, failings, foibles and my share of mistakes. I am imperfect and in many ways flawed. So i do not need to prove myself over and over again. I do not need to impress

others. I can be just natural – without formality or pretence. I can be bold in what i do and say – knowing that my world view is *mine*, not necessarily the same as another's.

As i continue on the pathway, i am not distracted by things that do not figure in my life priorities anyhow. There are many things i can still do for others, despite my limitations. By doing these, i take in what my cup of life can hold and then my cup overflows with joy, contentment and happiness.

Watch out for the special issue of *The Speaking Tree* Sunday edition dated March 4 guest-edited by Anandmurti Gurumaa.

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*Thus Spake Shri
Swaminarayan*

When God incarnates in human form on earth to redeem jivas or life forms, He does so with His divine abode Akshardham, the divine muktas or liberated jivas and His full fledged Lordship.



Craving sense pleasures for fulfilment by enjoying them is akin to pouring water into a fissure which has opened up in the ground and reaches into the depths of the earth. It will never be filled.



The blissful darshan of Paramatma even in the blink of an eye, is more blessed than all the happiness offered by the seductive sense-objects of millions of universes.



The supreme endeavour that pleases God, out of all the endeavours such as Ashtanga Yoga, Samkhya, tapas, renunciation, pilgrimages, vows, yagnas and charity is: Satsang.
Shri Hari Jayanti today is celebration of the birth of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Meditate Without Expectations

Interaction: Osho

Many years ago, it seems, i used to be able to meditate. A beautiful, silent, transparent state would arrive from somewhere; i presumed this was meditation. Now, nothing comes except a racing mind. What happened?

The days when you were feeling a kind of meditation happening to you were the days you were not looking for it – it was happening to you. Now you are trying to make it happen, and that makes all the difference. All things that are really valuable in life only happen; you cannot make them happen, you cannot do them. It may be meditation, it may be love, bliss, it may be silence.

Anything that goes beyond your mind is beyond your capacity to do it; you can only do things which come in the territory of mind.

The mind is doer, but your being is not a doer. Your being is just an opening, and a deep acceptance of whatever happens, with no complaint or grudge – just pure gratefulness. And that, too, is not done by you; that is also part of happening.

Something happens to you – it is so beautiful, blissful – the mind starts immediately desiring that it should happen more, more often, and deeper. The moment mind comes in, it disturbs everything. Mind is the devil, the destroyer.

Be aware that mind should not be allowed to interfere in things of the beyond. Mind is perfectly good as a mechanic, a technician. Give your mind what it can do, but don't let it interfere in things which are beyond its capacity. One problem is that mind desires for more. As far as the world of doing is concerned, you can have a bigger, better

house, furniture – you can do everything better; it is within capacity of mind.

But beyond mind...mind can only desire, and each desire is going to be frustrated. Instead of bringing more meditation, it will bring you more frustration. Instead of bringing you more love, it will bring to you more anger. Instead of silence and peace, it will bring more traffic of thoughts – and that happens to almost everybody. You have to outgrow it.

Untry and untry again. Whenever the idea of trying arises, immediately drop it. It is going to lead you into failure, frustration... and everybody can drop it, because it never brings anything. Drop failure, frustration, despair and hopelessness and forget all about meditation.

One day, suddenly, you will find a window opens, and a fresh breeze with new rays has filled your heart. Again, don't commit the same mistake! Be thankful for what is happening, but don't ask for more – and more will be coming.

Slowly, slowly it becomes your heartbeat; waking, sleeping, it is always there, it never goes. But it is not your doing. You cannot brag that "I have done it." You can only say, "I have allowed the unknown to do it to me." It is always from the unknown that great experiences enter into our small hearts, and when we are trying hard to get them, we become so tense that the very tension prevents them.

When you are not trying, and you are relaxed – you are not even bothered about meditation and things like that – you suddenly find footsteps of the unknown, something from nowhere, approaching you. Look at it with wonder, not with desire. Look at it with gratitude, but not with greed. From The Golden Future, courtesy Osho International Foundation, www.osho.com



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My Actions

It is in the best interest of a man to become a Karma Yogi and work to the best of his abilities and without bothering about the results.

Sama Veda



According to the karma of past actions, one's destiny unfolds, even though everyone wants to be so lucky.

Guru Granth Sahib



My actions are my only true belongings. I cannot escape the consequences of my actions. My actions are the ground upon which I stand.

Thich Nhat Hanh



Justice, it should be noted, in kabbalistic terminology, is compared to what other traditions call karma. That is to say, cosmic justice is the spiritual law that every action, word or thought reverberates throughout the universe.

Rabbi Cooper



Like gravity, karma is so basic we often don't even notice it.

Sakyong Mipham

Be Rational And Compassionate

Balmiki Prasad Singh

The enlightenment of Gautama at Bodhi Gaya made a great impact on human consciousness and changed our future course. In Rabindranath Tagore's novel *Ghaire-Baire* (Home and World), the author-protagonist declares: 'It was Buddha who conquered the world, not Alexander' - for Buddha threw light on something of eternal value.

The doctrine of the middle path, which emphasises moderation in all things, accommodation of antithetical points of view, and primacy of a common-sense approach, is not without its possible misuses. To arrive at the middle path is not to compromise but to hold a harmonious view among conflicting interpretations. This is a difficult task. At a deeper level, it denotes unity of mind and thought.

In Buddha's conception of dharma, there was no place for priest-craft and ritualism. Love and kindness are the very basis of society. Hatred, he said, is never appeased by more hatred - it could only be defused by friendship and sympathy.

Our ordinary sense of love and compassion is involved with attachment. The deep feeling of compassion and love for one's own family is related to attachment, and so is confined to a limited circle. It is centred on familial relationship. In contrast to this is a clear recognition of the importance and rights of others. Developed from that viewpoint, compassion will reach even your enemy.

Buddha believed that every individual must find the truth in his own way and should question everything, even his own words and sayings. In this new rationality there was no place for blind faith.

M K Gandhi felt that if we had accepted Buddha's social philosophy there would have been no question of practising untouchability.

There would have been no denial of education to women or to certain sections of society.

Buddha is today seen as a rationalist, an empiricist, and a social prophet, and his dharma based on non-violence and compassion presents a practical ideology for a new age. In his teachings he never deviated from human nature and natural surroundings. He would emphasise that nirvana or enlightenment was natural to human experience and so was not the preserve of a select few.

Modernists feel strongly about the social role that Buddhism can play. In India, for example, a crusade was initiated in 1958 against the caste theory of untouchability. The solution was presented in the form of a return to Buddhism.

It was clear that individuals who would experience cruelty at the hands of some forms of institutional religious practices would be welcome to move to Buddha's teachings of *karuna* and *love*.

Buddha's scrupulous empiricism, his support of intellectual and personal independence, his belief in dialogue and promotion of the 'middle path' are beacons to help us see our way out of present-day

problems. We may not be able to fully practise the method he prescribed or raise ourselves to the level of his conduct but can certainly move towards building institutions and supporting individuals that make for a truly compassionate political and social architecture as called for in the Bahudha approach.

The approach of rational self-enquiry also enables a person to achieve a higher state of discipline and harmony beyond narrow sectarian and national prejudices. All these become axiomatic when seen in the light of the well-known Buddhist maxim: 'Be a lamp unto yourself'. *The writer, who is governor of Sikkim, has authored Bahudha and the Post-9/11 World.*

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What Is Truth?

Wherever a being is
born, whether
unmoving or moving,
know thou Arjuna that
it is from the union
between the field and
the knower of the field.
Bhagwad Gita 13:26



The real sky knows that
samsara and nirvana are
merely illusory display.
Mipham Rinpoche



In order to appreciate
truth, approach it
through itself, without
any game of hide
and seek.
Meher Baba



A half-truth is a whole lie.
Yiddish Proverb



The least initial
deviation from the
truth is multiplied later
a thousand-fold.
Aristotle



A little inaccuracy
sometimes saves tons
of explanation.
Saki



Truth is such a rare
thing; it is delightful
to tell it.
Emily Dickinson

MMS, The Closet Spiritualist

Narayani Ganesh

The globally respected economist and scholar has been credited with heralding a new era of economic liberalisation in India. Yet Manmohan Singh has been at the receiving end of several barbs of late. Criticisms range from adjectives like "ineffective", "pusillanimous" and "understated" to "spineless" and "puppet PM".

"It astonishes me that Manmohan Singh should talk so little and be so barely visible that we might be forgiven for thinking that India has an imaginary prime minister," wrote a celebrity-journalist in his blog a few months ago.

It is difficult to believe that the architect of India's reforms could be all that vulnerable, naive or "imaginary". The non-committal, non-controversial and understated disposition that characterises the gentleman could be a veneer that conceals a far more evolved and enlightened approach towards his duties – that enables him to navigate life without much ado.

In a speech he gave at a conclave held in the capital, Singh said: "I do not want India to be a superpower; i just want India to stand with dignity in the comity of nations." So he doesn't seem to display any signs of being power-needy.

Perhaps he has no dark side, then. Manmohan Singh could, in all likelihood, be an advanced spiritualist who perceives himself as having absolutely no stake – neither in the country, nor in the species nor indeed in the planet! He also shows great resilience in adverse situations, whether in a political, social or economic exigency. To be detached like a yogi even while living among fellow beings in the rough and tumble of politics and economics is no easy task. Guru Nanak described such a one as 'raj mein jog' – one who can achieve enlightenment in civic life.

He also said: "The lotus in the water is not wet. Nor the water-fowl in the stream./ If a man would live, but by the world untouched,/ Meditate and repeat the name of the Lord Supreme."

Extolling the attributes of the one who has cultivated studied non-attachment to highs and lows, Guru Tegh Bahadur sang thus: "...He who has neither gluttony in his heart/ Nor vanity nor attachment with worldly things,/ He whom nothing moves,/ Neither good fortune nor ill,/ Who cares not for the world's applause,/ Nor its censure,/ Who ignores every wishful fantasy/ And accepts what comes his way as it comes.../ He knows the righteous path..."

Some might conclude that the PM's proclivity for remaining 'Nirlep Narayan' makes him out to be one without a stake and therefore he has nothing to win or lose. If he makes promises, they're bound to be ones that concern issues that would get resolved.

If not now, then later and if not later, even later, perhaps,...or not.

Could one compare Manmohan Singh with King Janaka, who is the only one Krishna praises in the Bhagwad Gita for having transcended everything even while administering a kingdom? There are tantalising similarities between the PM's studied 'indifference' and the transcendence of Janaka that leads one to conclude that Manmohan Singh is laissez-faire by nature, in the spiritual sense.

How will all this pan out if Manmohan Singh and his party lose the next round of elections? He might just quote from the Ashtavakra Gita: "Lifetime after lifetime, kingdoms, sons, wives, jewels and appearances to which you were attached, have been lost... For innumerable births have you undertaken work, painful and exacting, with your body, mind and speech. Hence find rest at least now."

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The Greatest Miracle Of All

J P Vaswani

Once a man asked me, "Have you ever had a sleepless night?" I said i have indeed. There are days when the body is overworked, fatigued and so exhausted that sleep eludes us. I'm sure all of us have gone through this experience at one time or other and i am no exception. "I'll tell you what you can do to overcome sleeplessness," he said to me enthusiastically. "You must count sheep."

"I think i have a better method, my friend," i replied with a smile. "I count my blessings instead!" There are so many things i'm grateful for: gift of human birth; wonderful parents, my family, brothers and sisters; friends and above all my beloved master and mentor, Sadhu Vaswani, whose grace has been the most inspiring influence on my life.

When i count my blessings and keep thanking God, it induces the marvellous and restful feeling that God is present and all is well with this world.

The Zen Master, Ling Chi, said that the real miracle is not to walk on water, in air, or on burning charcoal, but just to walk on earth. How wonderful for us to stop and breathe in the awareness that the world is a beautiful place; that being alive is a vital, joyous experience; and that life is the greatest miracle of all!

We need to cultivate the belief that the universe is friendly, that life is benevolent, that good things will happen to us and that even if bad things happen; they can make us better and wiser!

Have you ever come upon a field full of flowers? Have you got up to watch the glorious sunrise that happens morning after

morning? Have you felt the gentle breeze brush your face and ruffle your hair? Have you inhaled the scented night air and looked at the moon and stars with awe and wonder? Have you ever stopped to ask yourself at such moments, what have i done to deserve these marvellous gifts?

The answer is that none of us ever did anything to earn these gifts nor do they make demands upon us for return or repayment. They are just there; they are ours for the asking!

In polite circles, it is expected that people say "Thank you" for every little thing others do for their benefit. People thank waiters who serve them in restaurants. The senior executive thanks his secretary who organises his appointments. We thank the telephone operator who gets us the connection we seek. Even the disembodied voices on the answering machines of banks and business enterprises thank us for calling them! Is it not fitting then, that we extend such politeness and courtesy to God who has given us so much to be grateful for?

Let not your gratitude stop with words. Gratitude is appreciation; gratitude is goodwill; gratitude is a benevolent and warm feeling for someone who has helped us, been good to us in one way or another.

To express this spirit of gratitude in the best possible way, we must utilise our God-given gifts as best as we can. Our body, mind, senses and intellect are amazing gifts, and we need to put them to the best possible use. Let's translate our thanksgiving into action. Let us use our God-given gifts to promote unity, harmony, peace and joy in this world. Only then are we truly thanking our Creator for this marvellous gift of human birth.



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International Yoga Week

Yoga should be practised with firm determination and perseverance, without any mental reservation or doubts.

Bhagwad Gita 6.23



I bow with my hands together to the eminent sage Patanjali, who removed the impurities of mind through yoga, of speech through grammar, and of body through medicine.

Bhoja's Rajamarttanda commentary on Yoga Sutras



You can enter yoga, or the path of yoga, only when you are totally frustrated with your own mind as it is. If you are still hoping that you can gain something through your mind, yoga is not for you.

Osho



Yoga teaches us to cure what need not be endured and endure what cannot be cured.

BKS Iyengar



The word yoga literally means to join up, or to yoke together. What we're trying to join together in yoga is body, mind and spirit.

Alison Donley

Cosmic Cycle Of Life And Death

Moni Mohan Bhattacharyya

If you walk continuously along a straight path, you will never be found again. But on a cyclic path, you come back repeatedly at the starting point and eventually cover endless distance, provided the energy and system remain intact. Interestingly, most phenomena occurring in nature favour a cyclic rather than straight path.

In the greater universe, we see planets circling around stars and stars moving, centring around the galaxy. The process has been going on in billions of other galaxies since creation. However, such movement is not without purpose.

Apart from gigantic celestial bodies, it is surprising that microscopic subatomic particles inside matter like electrons are also moving in orbits around the nucleus of the atom. These are all energy particles and are responsible for matter formation and destruction.

Returning to our planet, one of the most important phenomena sustaining the life process is plants' photosynthesis. It continuously converts carbon dioxide released by life forms to oxygen in the atmosphere through cycles so that there is never any dearth of any component. Apart from this, there are myriad other cycles occurring in nature that protect creation.

Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose wrote in his book, *Abyakta*, while going to explore the source of the Ganga, albeit philosophically, "Oh river, where have you come from? Where will you go?" The river replied "From the locks of matted hair of Shiva I originate and go back to the same place yet again."

Why does nature prefer the cyclic path so spontaneously all along? Sadi Carnot, French engineer, discovered in 1832 that a reversible

engine generates maximum output only when it works in cycles. It is also independent of the working substance used.

If the cyclic path happens to be so desirable both for the material and the living world, then it is highly probable that the most vital phenomenon on earth concerning 'birth-death' of human beings should also work in cycles and is very unlikely to be a one-off incident. How does it work then?

According to the Prasnopanishada, at the time of death, the old body being incapable of sustaining the life process any longer perishes along with senses and buddhi or intellect, leaving mind and soul intact to space. While the soul behaves as an onlooker only, mind stores all *sanskaras* like a computer's hard disk. This soul-mind system acting as a link then enters a new embryonic body, the matrix of which is determined by the previous mind at the time of death. The soul-mind then directs the body as steam drives a steam engine away.

However, evolution from raw mind to enlightened mind is a long journey considering that change in mindset is undoubtedly a slow process. To effect this time-consuming transformation, continuous cycles rather than a single one are the right answer. Had it not been so, all souls should have required the same state of attainment at the end of a one-off cycle... With the path remaining the same and with changed system (new soul-mind), each time at the start, the soul-mind combo can, therefore, repeat its journey afresh through a chain of cycles, which entails continuous cleansing of the fleeting mind from illusory bondage of negativity by selfless karma till it achieves liberation. This has been the purpose as also Divine Will, which the cyclic path delivers uniquely.

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At The Oscars

He said, 'Wherever you go and whoever you meet, always treat people with kindness and humour.' *The Descendants' Amara Miller on the best advice co-star George Clooney gave her*



My parents are the ones that gave me opportunity, and taught me to pursue the things that interest me. They're the reason i'm here. It just felt like a nice thing to do to let them see this crazy and fantastic night.

Brad Pitt on bringing his parents to the Oscars



But at a certain point, you have to represent something bigger than yourself.

That's what the movie's about too, man. See, it's like art imitating life. *Viola Davis on being afraid of the fight for her role in The Help*



No matter how intelligent your message is, no matter how...progressive your ideas are, if they're not entertaining, they should not be in a movie. You should write them in a journal... *Woody Allen*

Possessive Fear In Relationships

J Krishnamurti

For most of us, relationship with another is based on dependence, either economic or psychological. Dependence creates fear, possessiveness, friction, suspicion and frustration. Economic dependence on another can perhaps be eliminated through legislation and proper organisation, but i am referring especially to that psychological dependence on another, which is the outcome of craving for personal satisfaction, happiness, and so on. One feels, in this possessive relationship, enriched, creative and active; one feels one's own little flame of being is increased by another.

In order not to lose this source of completeness, one fears the loss of the other, and so possessive fears come into being with all their resulting problems. Thus in this relationship of psychological dependence, there must always be conscious or unconscious fear, suspicion, that often lies hidden in pleasant-sounding words. The reaction of this fear leads one ever to search for security and enrichment through various channels, or to isolate oneself in ideas and ideals, or to seek substitutes for satisfaction.

Though one is dependent on another, there is yet the desire to be inviolate, to be whole. The complex problem in relationship is how to love without dependence, without friction and conflict; how to overcome the desire to isolate oneself, to withdraw from the cause of conflict. If we depend for our happiness on another, on society or on environment, they become essential to us; we cling to them, and any alteration of these we violently oppose because we depend upon them for our psychological security and comfort.

Though intellectually we may perceive that life is a continual process of flux, of mutation

necessitating constant change, emotionally or sentimentally we cling to established and comforting values; hence there is a constant battle between change and the desire for permanency. Is it possible to put an end to this conflict?

Life cannot be without relationship, but we have made it so agonising and hideous by basing it on personal and possessive love. Can one love and yet not possess? You will find the true answer not in escape, ideals and beliefs but through the understanding of the causes of dependence and possessiveness...

As long as we do not understand individual relationship, we cannot have a peaceful society. Since our relationship is based on a possessive love, we have to become aware, in ourselves, of its birth, its causes and its action. In becoming deeply aware of the process of possessiveness with its violence, fears, its reactions, there comes an understanding that is whole, complete. This understanding alone frees thought from dependence and possessiveness. It is within oneself that harmony in relationship can be found, not in another, nor in environment.



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In relationship, the primary cause of friction is oneself, the self that is the centre of unified craving. If we can but realise that it is not how another acts that is of primary importance, but how each one of us acts and reacts, and that if that reaction and action can be fundamentally, deeply understood, then relationship will undergo a deep and radical change...In this relationship with another, there is not only the physical problem but also that of thought and feeling on all levels, and one can be harmonious with another only when one is harmonious integrally in oneself...

Relationship is a process of self-revelation in which one discovers the hidden causes of sorrow. This self-revelation is only possible in relationship. Courtesy: KFI

Just A Call Away

Talk: Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

I once went on a condolence visit to two young people, a sister and a brother, whose father had died, leaving them alone in their flat in New Delhi. Naturally, both of these young people were very sad. One of the visitors, who was a family friend, spoke some words of solace. He said: "Don't worry, I am just a call away."

Suddenly a thought came to my mind. God Almighty is also just a call away from every man and woman. There is a relevant verse in the Quran: "When anyone asks you about Me, say that I am near. I respond to the call of one who calls, whenever he calls to Me." (2:186)

The Creator created man in such a way that there is no distance between the two: both are very near to each other. It is possible for man to contact God Almighty at any moment, from wherever he may be. This concept gives every man and woman unshakable confidence. It gives every man and woman a source of help in every situation.

If you have a mobile phone in your pocket when you leave home, you will confidently believe that you are not far away from your family. You can make instant contact with your family from anywhere in the world. The same holds true for the man-God relationship.

I am a great believer in God. I can recall many instances when I have found myself in a state of helplessness. Then I prayed and asked God for His help and, invariably, I realised that God Almighty was with me. He solved my problem, and turned around the situation in my favour.

This belief gives me conviction and determination. In my experience, everyone is in need of such a source of conviction.

In our daily lives, we frequently face situations where we feel that, with our limited resources, we cannot cope with them. We need, therefore, to believe in a supernatural source of help.

This belief energises our minds. It gives us new courage to continue with the task in hand. This belief plays a great role in our lives in that it adds immeasurable hope to our struggle. It makes us able to tap our hidden energy.

Life is full of disadvantages. Frequently, we come face-to-face with unfamiliar situations. Dealing with them takes thought and planning and, at that time, we need some pointers to a future line of action. In such a situation, belief in God serves as a lighthouse. We are like the captain of an ocean-going vessel, who finds himself in a state of loneliness and isolation. Then he spots a lighthouse on the coastline. Its light gives him new hope, and he decides to follow the path it illuminates. The result is that he is successful in reaching his destination.

Indeed, life is like sailing across a great ocean. We need to believe that there is someone on the coast who can give us help when we are at our most helpless. This is the role of God in the life of every man and woman. One's success is 50% struggle and 50% hope. It is a source of great hope for everyone that God is with us. There is no distance between man and God. He is just a call away from us.

I am in my late 80s and can say that my life has been full of challenges, full of problems, and the only thing that has saved me from succumbing in any situation is my belief in God.

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Bust That Stress

Unnatural work produces too much stress.

Bhagwad Gita 3.35



The original source of all tension is becoming. One is always trying to be something; no one is at ease with himself as he is. The being is not accepted, the being is denied, and something else is taken as an ideal to become.

Osho



You can't cultivate the "sense of belonging". You drop the stress and fear – it comes in. You already belong to this entire existence.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar



It's not the situation that's causing your stress, it's your thoughts, and you can change that right here and now.

Gerald Jampolsky



The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.

William James



It's not stress that kills us; it is our reaction to it.

Hans Selye

You Squeeze Me Like A Lemon

Janina Gomes

Dear Life,

You promised me a lot. But what you have given me has surpassed all that you promised. I knew that both beauty and ugliness would come my way for nothing comes unalloyed in life. My life has encompassed both good and bad because you have made me understand only too well that nothing comes unalloyed. When I look back and also regard the present, I realise that the richness of life is in bringing all these experiences together and weaving a beautiful tapestry of them.

When I try to achieve my goals in haste, you slow me down. You teach me patience; the value of waiting for what is worthwhile. You teach me that life is ever-flowing; like the river that gets around so many bends and boulders, you also make me flow over and around obstacles and difficulties.

The trajectory I choose for myself now is different, on account of the lessons you have taught me. By choosing not to identify myself completely with difficulties that come my way, I look beyond them and myself, despite my multiple identities, to the spiritually awakened Self that's inside me.

I had the same expectations as many others do – marriage and family. But you showed me that there are infinite ways of reaching my full potential. There are conventional structures and landmarks, but not all of us pass by the same way.

You often squeeze me like a lemon and so stress, pain and defeat become part of my experiences. You make demands on me. I was made to take on responsibility, to care for others and to give something back to you. However, when the demands became excessive you

have shown me that sometimes I have to be squeezed to give out my best.

You have also given me the chance and opportunity to recover when the feeling of being squeezed of all energy threatens to take over. There comes a healing touch – or there is sickness that forces one to stop and take stock, and helps one emerge fitter and stronger for the experience.

Looking back, I find that you have enriched me with a gamut of experiences. You've let me experience the fact that being tested does not mean one has to seek escape from you. When we say 'yes' to life, we are really saying 'yes' also to surprises, setbacks and personal tragedies, and not only to happy times.

In the course of my life, so many things have happened, but not every happening was significant. I have now learned to skip and not mull over or get bogged down by happenings that could have been accidental, coincidental or negative, and therefore they do not say much to me anymore.

Life, you are a twin sister of Time. In learning to make the best use of time and putting our talents to best use in activities that are essentially time-bound, we are really living life to the full. There is time for everything under the sun. But you have impressed upon me that I should do and undertake only work and activities that promote life, not destroy it.

Yet, may I request you: Please don't squeeze me like a lemon. I have learnt my lessons and the need to put up a good fight and keep the faith. I will celebrate you and not waste the opportunity.

And when I whisper a prayer, I will say, 'Thank You Life, for the gift of Self to me'.

*With gratitude,
Janina*



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Young Leaders

A good leader does not worry about position. The respect that you gain through virtue is very different from the respect you gain through position. The respect you gain because you are a nice person, is genuine, it lasts long. It is spontaneous.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar



Go to the people. Learn from them. Live with them. Start with what they know. Build with what they have. The best of leaders when the job is done, when the task is accomplished, the people will say we have done it ourselves.

Lao Tzu



Focussing your life solely on making a buck shows poverty of ambition. It asks too little of yourself. For only when you hitch your wagon to something larger than yourself, do you realise your true potential.

Barack Obama



The important work of moving the world forward does not wait to be done by perfect men.

George Eliot

It's All About Your Attitude

Talk: Swami Kriyananda

Because the science of yoga deals so much with the awakening of subtle energies, many yoga students imagine the entire process of spiritual evolution to be a mere mechanism. They think by technique alone to find God. A technical age like ours predisposes people to commit such an error. Is it not the common belief that everything is a mechanism?

We have always been somewhat prone to mistake technique for inspiration. Yoga, which approaches the path to salvation more scientifically, offers at the same time a stronger temptation to confuse method with something infinitely more important on the path: right attitude.

Remember, technique is only a vehicle. What good is a car in the hands of a driver who has no idea where he wants to go? And of what use is it to be a technically skilled driver, if one's driving *attitudes* are anti-social?

The fact that yoga practice accelerates one's spiritual progress only *increases* the need for right attitude. Socially responsible attitudes are more important for automobile drivers travelling at high speeds.

Concentration on yoga techniques alone, without developing right attitudes, can prove dangerous. For spiritual progress can never be forced, any more than one can force the delicate mechanism of a watch. If nothing else, too technical an approach to yoga practice will strengthen the ego to the point where one's true, divine Self becomes almost hopelessly obscured.

Yoga has as its ultimate goal—awakening of Kundalini, the tremendous power that lies dormant at the base of the spine. A forceful awakening of this power, especially by violent breathing exercises and by certain physical

postures, but without any corresponding effort to develop spiritual attitudes, can be exceedingly dangerous. The enormous power of Kundalini can actually destroy the nervous system, if the ruling force in its awakening is not devotional aspiration, but an egotistical presumption that the heights of spirituality can be scaled by power alone. Consider: every time you express pure love, or think high thoughts, or associate attentively with spiritual people, Kundalini is already inspired to send advance emissaries of light upward to the brain. And every time you think selfish, or otherwise darkening thoughts, Kundalini moves downward, drawing light from the brain and leaving the mind a little darker than it was before.

It would be no exaggeration to say that attitude is everything. One may have right attitude and know nothing of yoga or of meditation, and still reach God, eventually. But without right attitude, lifetimes of yoga practice may develop nothing but spiritual pride, and an outward focus thereby for one's energies.

Look, then, to the saints. But since probably you must mix with worldly people, too, and may have to be more with them than with saints, look to them also. But study the end results of their attitudes. For even in a worldly sense, those attitudes bear the sweetest fruit which spring most purely from an inner source: self-giving, rather than possessive, love; a wish to correct oneself, not others; an inner freedom in every undertaking, and in every human relationship; an impersonal gaze that can enjoy even the world without constant reference to one's own standing with respect to it.

The realised yogi sees in all things the one, divine Self. But the novice yogi needs to cultivate, in addition to a divinely impersonal outlook, a more intimate, devotional attitude towards God.



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